NATION

Neurological conditions lead cause of ill health: Lancet

>> Page: 4 <<

BUSINESS

Government approves policy to promote EV manufacturing

>> Page: 7 <<

SPORTS

WPL Eliminator: RCB defeat MI by 5 runs

>> Page: 8 <<

www.twitter.com/EnglishSalar
www.facebook.com/EnglishSalar
www.instagram.com/dailysalarenglish
youtube.com/@dailysalardigital

SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساہ روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in www.magzter.com 16 MARCH 2024 | SATURDAY | BENGALURU | 6 RAMADAN, 1445 AH Vol 4 | Issue No 59 | Pages: 8

WE ARE HIRING

SUB-EDITOR
WEB EDITOR

Journalism degree preferred but not essential

Applicants with maximum 2 years of experience preferred. Freshers are encouraged to apply

SEND YOUR CV TO

asma@salar.news
anushreeirwin@gmail.com

SC pulls up SBI for incomplete information on electoral bonds

SC issues notice to SBI to reveal bond numbers, donors, parties

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

Supreme Court on Friday pulled up State Bank of India over non-disclosure of the numbers unique to each electoral bond that would help in matching donors with the recipient political party. It said SBI was "duty bound" to reveal them.

The top court also issued a notice to the country's largest bank to explain the reasons for not revealing the unique alphanumeric numbers in compliance of its directions even as a political row erupted over the electoral bonds scheme.

A five-judge Constitution bench of Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud and Justices Sanjiv Khanna, BR Gavai, JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said that SBI has not fully complied with its 11 March order in which it had ordered the bank to disclose all details concerning Electoral Bonds.

It also issued a notice to the country's largest bank to explain the reasons for not revealing the numbers **PHOTO: PTI**

It also allowed the request of Election Commission of India seeking the return of Electoral Bonds' documents handed over to the top court in sealed cover on two occasions. The poll panel told the bench that it did not retain any copies of these documents to uphold confidentiality and sought the return of the sealed envelopes to proceed with the court's direction to upload data on its website.

The apex court said its Registrar Judicial shall ensure that documents are scanned and digitised and once the exercise is complete the original documents shall be given back to ECI and it will then upload them on the website on or before 17 March.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta urged the court to issue notice to the bank since they may have something to say.Supreme Court by its February verdict had struck down electoral bonds scheme which allowed for anonymous funding to political parties, and ordered the SBI to stop issuing Electoral Bonds immediately.

While it is already known that the ruling BJP received the highest amount of donation of over Rs 6,000 crore, which was nearly half of the total, the data dump only disclosed the amount donated by each entity or individual. It does not say who donated to which party. SBI has said a total of 22,217 electoral bonds of varying denominations were purchased by donors between 1 April, 2019 and February 15 this year, out of which 22,030 were redeemed by political parties. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 2 & 3

AFTER DAY-LONG RAID

Drama unfolds as ED arrests Kavitha in Hyd

BRS MLC K Kavitha after she was arrested by ED from her residence, in Hyderabad, on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

HYDERABAD/ NEW DELHI, 15 MAR

Enforcement Directorate on Friday arrested BRS leader K Kavitha after a day-long raid at her premises in Hyderabad and was taking her to Delhi for questioning in a money laundering case linked to the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy.

Kavitha, 46, a Telangana Legislative Council member, was arrested by the central probe agency at 5.20 pm from her residence at Banjara Hills in Hyderabad, according to the arrest memo. Her husband DR Anil Kumar was informed about her arrest, ED officials said.

Agency sources said the BRS leader was being brought to Delhi for questioning.

The ED questioned Kavitha, the daughter of former Telangana chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao, thrice last year, and again summoned her in January but she did not depose citing a Supreme Court direction that allowed her protection from any coercive action.

Meanwhile, a video was shared by the BRS showing Kavitha's brother and party working president K T Rama Rao arguing with the ED officials, saying the agency has violated an undertaking given to the Supreme Court.

"You are in serious trouble," he was heard telling the officials in the video, which went viral.

In the video he also alleged that the family members were not allowed to enter the house even after the searches were concluded. Reacting to her arrest, Union Minister for Tourism G Kishan Reddy told reporters that ED raids are part of its inquiry into the case.

ED had claimed Kavitha was linked to a "South Group" lobby of liquor traders who were trying to play a larger role under the now scrapped Delhi excise policy for 2021-22.

It alleged that one of the accused in the case, Vijay Nair, received kickbacks to the tune of at least Rs 100 crore on behalf of AAP leaders from the "South Group", allegedly controlled by Sarath Reddy, Kavitha and Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy.

—PTI

- Kavitha, 46, a Telangana Legislative Council member, was arrested by the central probe agency at 5.20 pm from her residence at Banjara Hills in Hyderabad, according to the arrest memo. Her husband DR Anil Kumar was informed about her arrest, ED officials said.

Farmer dies by suicide due to dry borewell

BENGALURU, 15 MARCH

A 63-year-old farmer committed suicide after his crops withered due to drought in Uttara Kannada district on Friday. Babajan Davalasab Hubballi, a native of Indura village in Mundagoda taluk, planted areca nut and plantains across his 2.14 acres this year and was expecting a good crop. The farmer took an agriculture loan of Rs 2 lakh for developing his farm. But due to drought, the plants started withering and he ended life. Mundagoda police registered a case. *—Salar News.*

MHA launches mobile app for CAA

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

Union Home Ministry on Friday launched a mobile app that will allow eligible people to apply for Indian citizenship under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, officials said. According to a home ministry spokesperson, the application can be downloaded from the Google Play Store or the website -- indiancitizenshiponline.nic.in. "The 'CAA-2019' Mobile App for making applications under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 becomes operational," the spokesperson said. Earlier, the home ministry launched the portal for eligible people to apply for Indian citizenship under CAA. *—PTI*

China Moon mission fails to reach orbit after rocket falters

BEIJING, 15 MARCH

A pair of Chinese satellites failed to reach a planned orbit on their way to the moon after experiencing abnormalities, a rare setback for Beijing's high-profile space programme. The satellites, known as DRO-A and DRO-B, were launched on Wednesday evening from the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre in the Sichuan Province, the launch centre said in a press release on Thursday. They were carried by A Yuanzheng-1S (Expedition-1S) upper-stage aircraft, attached to a Long March-2C carrier rocket, it said. The first and second stages of the rocket operated normally, while the upper stage encountered an abnormality during flight. *—PTI*

BSY booked under POCSO Act

BENGALURU, 15 MARCH

Senior BJP leader and former Karnataka chief minister BS Yediyurappa has been booked under the POCSO Act based on a complaint by the mother of a 17-year-old girl, police said here on Friday.

The girl's mother alleged that Yediyurappa sexually assaulted her daughter during a meeting on 2 February. Denying the charge, the 81-year-old BJP Parliamentary Board member said he would fight the case legally.

Police sources said the girl's mother had in the past lodged over 50 complaints against various people including the then Bengaluru Police Commissioner Alok Kumar, and his staff, for allegedly manhandling her and abusing her.

Home Minister G Parameshwara said: "Some people say the woman is mentally sick."

She lodged a complaint against Kumar twice -- in 2021 and 2022 -- and also against the retired Bengaluru Police Commissioner and BJP leader Bhaskar Rao for allegedly "conspiring to ruin her life," in 2022.

Yediyurappa said the woman had been trying to meet him but was never allowed to enter his house. "Once when she was crying, I called her inside my house and spoke to the Police Commissioner B Dayananda, that some injustice had happened to her. However, when she started speaking something against me in front of me, I concluded that this woman is not proper," he said. "I heard that an FIR has been registered against me. I will do whatever has to be done legally but this also happens when one tries to help somebody," he said.

BS Yediyurappa **PHOTO: PTI**

After meeting the Police Commissioner, she gave a twist to the matter, Yediyurappa alleged.

Two purported videos have also emerged, apparently filmed by the girl when she went to meet Yediyurappa at his residence with her mother.

In one video, the girl's mother is seen addressing Yediyurappa as 'Appa Ji' and tells him that she hails from Shivamogga, the home district of the BJP leader. In the second video, the girl's mother is seen sitting next to Yediyurappa soon after entering his house and holding his hand. *—PTI*

WATER, AN EQUALIZER

Migrant workers carry pots to fill water from a tank in Krishnappa Layout amid the water crisis in Bengaluru. The crisis has hit the rich and poor alike **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

AHEAD OF POLLS, PM SPEARHEADS BJP'S SOUTH PUSH

PATHANAMTHITTA, 15 MARCH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday reached out to the Christian community which has a significant presence in this southern district, and also projected Anil K Antony -- son of Congress stalwart and former Union Minister AK Antony -- as a symbol of the youth.

"This is the kind of freshness that is required in Kerala politics," Modi said, referring to Anil Antony who had left the Congress and joined the BJP last year and is the saffron party's candidate from the Pathanamthitta Lok Sabha constituency.

He said that in the last Lok Sabha elections in 2019, BJP got a vote percentage in double digits and therefore, the target of double digit seats from Kerala is not too far. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Misinformed: India slams US for CAA remarks

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

External Affairs Ministry has said that the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is an internal matter of India and that those who have a "limited understanding of India's pluralistic traditions" should not make "misplaced, misinformed, and unwarranted" comments on the legislation. The MEA statement on Friday came after the US expressed concerns over the CAA, which was notified earlier this week.

Randhir Jaiswal **PHOTO: PTI**

The official Spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs, Randhir Jaiswal said, "Lectures by those who have a limited understanding of India's pluralistic traditions and the region's post-partition history are best not attempted. Partners and wellwishers of India should welcome the intent with which this step has been taken."

"CAA is about giving citizenship. It addresses the issue of statelessness, provides human dignity and supports human rights," he said. dded. The United States on Thursday that it is "concerned" about the notification of CAA in India, adding that it is "closely monitoring" the implementation of the act. "Respect for religious freedom and equal treatment under the law for all communities are fundamental democratic principles," US State Department Spokesperson, Matthew Miller said. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

1st Indian soldiers' batch back from Maldives

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

India on Friday said its first team of military personnel that was operating an advanced light helicopter in the Maldives has returned from the island nation.

The military team has been replaced by civilian technical experts.

Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu had set 10 March as the deadline for withdrawal of the first group of Indian military personnel from his country.

"The turnaround of the first team of personnel who were operating the ALH helicopter has been completed. The first batch of people that had to be replaced has been completed. The turnaround has happened," External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing.

Following the second meeting of the high-level core group that was set up to address the issue of withdrawal of Indian military personnel, the Maldivian Foreign Ministry had said India will replace all its military personnel in two phases by 10 May.

The second meeting of the core group took place in Delhi on 2 February.

The two sides decided to set up the core group following a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Maldivian President Muizzu on the sidelines of the COP28 summit in Dubai in December.

The ties between India and the Maldives came under some strain since Muizzu came to power in November. *—PTI*

NO FORENSIC REPORT YET

50 days after kid dies in school, dad seeks CID probe

DANIEL GEORGE
BENAGLURU, 15 MARCH

It has been almost two months since a four-year-old girl died after falling from the third floor of a preschool at Chellikere here, but the forensic report of the incident is still not out in the open.

"Does it take two months for a report to be handed over? My daughter was murdered in the school and it is not an accident," Jito Tomy Joseph, the father of Gianna Ann Jito, told Salar News. "I appeal to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Home Minister G Parameshwara to order a probe by Criminal Investigation Department into the death as I have lost faith in the police investigation."

The parents claim the CCTV footage was doctored. "A person went to the school the day after my daughter died and fiddled with the visuals. No police official is coming forward to tell us what the forensic report is all about or where the investigation is headed. Who do we approach and how do we get justice for our daughter who died for no fault of hers? Which child would venture onto the terrace of the school and jump to death?"

Gianna's parents Joseph and his wife Binitta Thomas moved to their hometown in Kerala for good after the tragedy **PHOTO: SALAR**

SALAR EXCLUSIVE

Gianna's parents Joseph and his wife Binitta Thomas used to work as software professionals in Bengaluru but they left the City and moved to their hometown, Kerala, for good after the tragedy. They say they will cooperate with the police and visit the City whenever needed.

The parents have started a campaign titled 'Justice for Gianna' on Instagram and Facebook pages, which has a large number of people expressing their anguish at police and their delayed investigation.

Joseph said he has been running from pillar to post to get justice for his daughter. "Our lives have turned upside down with the loss of Gianna and it is not going to be the same anymore. All we ask for is justice for her death and nothing else."

Gianna fell from the third floor of Delhi Preschool in Hennur police station limits on 22 January. Following a complaint filed by the girl's father, Hennur police have registered an FIR against the school authorities for negligence. The girl was taken to a hospital with severe injuries to her head and other parts of her body. Despite efforts to save her, Gianna died after a four-day battle for her life.

Hennur police inspector and investigating officer in the case, Deepak L, was not available for comment on the issue when contacted by Salar News. *—Salar News*

Govt extends deadline for agri loans till 31 March

MYSURU, 15 MARCH

State government has extended the deadline for repaying principal instalments of medium and long-term agricultural loans. Initially set for 29 February 2024, the deadline has been extended to 31 March. The extension applies to loans obtained from cooperative societies, including Primary Agricultural Land Cooperative Societies, Lamps Cooperative Societies, District Central Cooperative Banks, and Primary Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks. If farmers manage to make full repayments at cooperative societies or banks, the accrued interest on the outstanding amount will be waived. The government will reimburse the interest amount waived to the cooperative societies. Cooperative societies said 29,456 farmers have benefited from this waiving off. *—Salar News*

Bishops' Conference calls for day of prayer, fasting

BENGALURU, 15 MARCH

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) has announced a Day of Prayer and Fasting on 22 March. This call to action comes amid concerns regarding the nation's growing social and political issues. According to a press release from Rev. Peter Machado, Archbishop of Bengaluru, the CBCI, criticises the influence of populism, polarization, and a perceived erosion of democratic structures. They urge believers to utilize prayer and fasting as instruments to combat societal division and advocate for the restoration of constitutional values. President of CBCI Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas, emphasizes the purpose of the day "Prayer and fasting is the most powerful and effective means in our hands combating the forces of falsehood, violence." The CBCI expresses concern about the widening gap between rich and poor, unemployment, and alleged threats to minority rights. They view these issues as part of a "carefully crafted campaign" undermining the Constitution. Additionally, they reiterate demands for official recognition of Dalit Christians as a Scheduled Caste and protection of tribal rights. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: X/@ SGINDIA

Singapore envoy visits Rameshwaram Café

BENGALURU, 15 MARCH

Singapore High Commissioner to India, Simon Wong, sprang a surprise when he visited the Rameshwaram Cafe for breakfast on Friday morning, weeks after a low-intensity IED blast shook the popular eatery, leaving nine injured and causing widespread panic. Clad in the official red Singapore T-shirt and casuals, Wong walked into the cafe and ordered a dosa and a filter coffee. Only after the envoy posted the photograph on social media was it known that he had visited the café. The cafe, located near the International Technology Park here in the City, reopened a week after the 1 March blast with beefed-up security. It was a show of support by Singapore against the extremist act. Taking to social media he wrote: "Delighted to have breakfast at the reopened @RameshwaramCafe. We stand with our friends in India". When contacted by Salar News for comment on his visit the Singapore High Commission in New Delhi replied that the diplomat was travelling. Home Minister G Parameshwara said this week that the agencies have almost tracked the suspected bomber in the cafe blast case. On 9 March, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) released pictures and videos in which the suspected bomber is seen walking. *—Salar News*

Freeze BJP's bank accounts, probe electoral bonds: Cong

Kharge says BJP pressured people to give ₹6,060 cr donations

BENGALURU, 15 MARCH

Congress President M Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday demanded a special investigation into the electoral bonds scheme -- through which the BJP has received Rs 6,060 crore over five years.

He demanded the party's bank accounts should be frozen till its completion.

Claiming that there were many dubious donors, he said people who have purchased such bonds were either involved in ED or Income Tax cases, or raided by these agencies.

While BJP has collected crore of rupees in electoral bonds, the bank account of the Congress, which received donations, was frozen, Kharge said.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi says 'Na khaunga, na khane dunga (Will not eat, will not let others eat)', but today it has been exposed by Supreme Court how the BJP has made money out of electoral bonds. SBI data shows BJP got 50 per cent donations and Congress got only 11 per cent," he said.

AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge with KPCC President and DyCM DK Shivakumar during a meeting on electoral bond issue, in Bengaluru on Friday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

Speaking to reporters here, he said, "Even our voter pattern (percentage) if you see we are nearly one third and rest of the people are two-third including BJP, but in donations they got more than 50 per cent."

"Who are they? People who have donated, either they are involved in ED case, Income Tax, or raided by these agencies. Ultimately the government, particularly Modi and his party pressured these people to give more donations to their party. Otherwise this much of a difference cannot be there," he alleged.

- Congress Treasurer said a total 22,217 bonds were issued since the scheme was launched in 2018, but details on Election Commission's website are only in respect of 18,871 of them

Noting that Congress's bank accounts were frozen due to which they cannot be operated, Kharge said, "IT (Income Tax department) was instructed to do this and Rs 300 crore is frozen."

"If the Opposition party's account is frozen, how will they fight the election," Kharge further asked.

"Therefore I demand an inquiry at the highest level and unless the truth comes out, their (BJP) account should also be frozen," he said.

He also alleged that Modi wants to "kill" Opposition parties, as he doesn't want them to thrive in democracy.

Asked whether Congress will move Supreme Court to block the BJP's account, Kharge said, "I'm now demanding an inquiry. The next course of action we will take. The Working Committee (of Congress) is going to meet shortly, there I can discuss. I'm not Modi, I have to consult."

Congress Treasurer Ajay Maken said a total 22,217 bonds were issued since the scheme was launched in 2018, but the details on the Election Commission's website are only in respect of 18,871 of them, and those pertaining to the remaining 3,346 are not available, and SBI has not shared them.

"These 3,346 bonds, the total amount pertains to is Rs 2,500 crore. So whom the Modi government and the SBI are trying to shield?" he asked. *—PTI*

Shettar will contest from Belagavi: BSY

BENGALURU, 15 MARCH

> **Shettar was not willing to contest from Belagavi. I convinced him to contest from there**
>
> -BS Yediyurappa, Former chief minister

Former chief minister BS Yediyurappa on Friday said party leader Jagadish Shettar will contest the Lok Sabha election from Belagavi.

"Shettar met me yesterday. He was not willing to contest from Belagavi Lok Sabha constituency. I convinced him to contest from there," Yediyurappa, a member of BJP Parliamentary Board, told reporters here.

BJP is yet to officially announce his candidature for the seat. Yediyurappa said there is no doubt that BJP will win the election from Belagavi with a huge margin. According to him, there is a wave in favour of BJP in Karnataka, which will lead to the party's victory in all the 28 Lok Sabha seats.

Belagavi seat is currently represented by Mangala Angadi, the widow of former Union minister of State Suresh Angadi. She had won with a slender margin of over 5,000 votes in the 2021 bypoll against Congress strongman Satish Jarkiholi, when the seat fell vacant after her husband's death.

Shettar, a former chief minister, also happens to be a relative of the Angadi family and was the poll in-charge of this seat when Mangala faced the bypoll.

Shettar, who had quit the BJP to join Congress ahead of the state assembly polls last year after being denied the ticket, rejoined his old party in January. *—PTI*

Mangala *PHOTO: FB*

Mangala Suresh Angadi, 60

- Incumbent Belagavi MP
- She is the first woman MP from Belagavi
- Party: BJP
- Profession: Agriculturist, Business and social service
- Assets: Rs 137 crore
- Education: Bachelor of Science
- Criminal cases: NIL
- Wife of deceased Union minister Suresh Angadi
- Won the by-polls in 2021 against Cong's Satish Jarkiholi after Suresh died
- She is the first to defeat Jarkiholi, who never lost an election in 30 years

'Wife's family not behind issuing ticket'

MYSURU, 15 MARCH

Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar *PHOTO: PTI*

Scion of erstwhile Mysuru royal family Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar on Friday said there is no role of his wife's family members in issuing BJP ticket to him for Lok Sabha elections.

Yaduveer is married to Trishika Kumari Wadiyar, who hails from Dungarpur Royal Family in Rajasthan. Trishika's father Harshavardhan Singh was a BJP Rajya Sabha MP.

Yaduveer expressed gratitude towards his ancestors and highlighted his commitment to serving the people of Mysuru. He emphasised the profound reverence the people of Mysuru hold for their lineage and ancestors, a sentiment he deeply respects and acknowledges. Dispelling rumours about any opposition from royal family member Pramoda Devi regarding his foray into politics, Yaduveer said every step he takes is with her blessings and consent. Yaduveer said he aims to transform Mysuru into a premier tourism destination in South India, fostering economic growth and development in the region.

Yaduveer said despite losing the ticket to Pratap Simmha, he harboured no resentment and had received words of encouragement from the latter. *—Salar News*

1ST FRIDAY OF RAMADAN

Muslim community people offer prayers on the first Friday of Ramadan at City Jamia Masjid, in Bengaluru on Friday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

Don't insult beneficiaries of guarantees right: CM to BJP

BENGALURU, 15 MARCH

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday asked BJP leaders to not insult the five crore beneficiaries of the five guarantee schemes by the Congress government. "Guarantee schemes are the right of the people of Karnataka," Siddaramaiah said.

Speaking at the convention of beneficiaries of guarantee schemes in Mysuru, Siddaramaiah said, guarantees are implemented to help the people suffering from price hikes.

"Our guarantees have also reached BJP's doorstep. BJP voters are also beneficiaries of Congress guarantees. By talking lightly about the schemes, you are insulting them." he added.

He further said "After coming to power, we have implemented five-for-five guarantees. Following which they spread lies about the State being bankrupt due to its implementation. But we have also earmarked money for development programmes outside of guarantee projects in the budget. Thus, this statement of BJP also have proven false," said the Chief Minister. Attacking BJP, he said that after the successful implementation of the guarantees, BJP portrayed the guarantees as their schemes naming it as the Modi guarantee.

Siddaramaiah *PHOTO: PTI*

> **Our guarantees have also reached BJP's doorstep. BJP voters are also beneficiaries of Congress guarantees**
>
> -Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister

Siddaramaiah also questioned BJP's contributions to the progress of Mysuru.

"BJP has not contributed to the development of Mysuru and for the people. Whereas, Congress has been keen on the progress of Mysuru by providing grants to all the development programmes for hospital, college, market, road, water."

He also questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi for promising to credit Rs 15 lakh in every Indian's bank account if he came to power for the second time. *—Salar News*

GARDEN CITY DRIES UP

City's flora grapples with water crisis

Bengaluru used to have a green cover of around 70 per cent in the 1970s *PHOTO: PTI*

MEGHANA PRASAD
BENGALURU, 15 MARCH

Bengaluru was known for its vibrant green spaces and clean waterbodies, but now the City is facing a never-before water crisis.

The Garden City of India used to have a green cover of around 70% in the 1970s, but it has now reduced to around 14% or 24,710 acres, with around 979 species of trees and 980 species of plants. While some of the flora are drought-tolerant, others require consistent water to survive.

"Many nurseries and parks in the City are struggling to maintain their plants due to limited access to water," Ramesh DS, Director of Horticulture, Lalbagh, told Salar News. "These nurseries and their growing plants are essential for the environment of the City in the future," he said.

Lalbagh Botanical Garden and Cubbon Park, often known as the 'lungs' of the City, are too bearing the brunt of the water shortage. The ban imposed by Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) on using drinking water for gardening has impacted their maintenance. Lalbagh gardens covers an area of around 240 acres (including the lake and mountain) and Cubbon Park covers an area of 198 acres.

"Both the green spaces require at least 1.5 million litres of water per day to maintain the greenery," Kusuma G, Deputy Director of Horticulture (Lalbagh Gardens), told Salar News. "We depend on the treated water that we get from BWSSB's Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) and the borewells situated in the parks. We are resorting to drip irrigation and using recycled water whenever possible. With the water crisis rising, the STPs may also see a shortage of water. As of now, the water is enough to maintain these spaces, but nothing can be said about the future."

The STPs in Lalbagh and Cubbon Park can generate 1.5 and 4.5 million litres per day, respectively. These treatment plants get the sewerage water from the surrounding public and residential areas. The water is then treated and used for maintaining the parks. "Since both the parks require only 1.5 MLD of water, these STPs are enough for us and we do not need the drinking water at all. The borewell water is mainly used by the nurseries that come under Horticulture Department," Kusuma said.

The water crisis in the City stems from a combination of factors. Declining rainfall, coupled with an increasing population and unregulated groundwater extraction, has led to alarmingly low water tables. Urban horticulture plays a crucial role in regulating temperatures, providing fresh air, and promoting biodiversity. With limited water availability, these benefits are placed at risk. *—Salar News*

PM to launch campaign from Kharge's home turf

BENGALURU, 15 MARCH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi would formally kickstart the BJP's Lok Sabha election campaign in Karnataka on Saturday from Congress President M Mallikarjun Kharge's home turf -- Kalaburagi.

He is scheduled to address a mega public meeting at the district headquarters town's NV Ground at 2pm. Kharge, who had represented Kalaburagi twice in the past, lost to BJP's Umesh Jadhav by a margin of 95,452 votes in the 2019 general elections here -- the octogenarian leader's first electoral loss in his political life spanning several decades.BJP has once again fielded Jadhav from the segment.On 18 March, Modi will be in Shivamogga, the home district of veteran BJP leader BS Yediyurappa, and is scheduled to address a huge public meeting at 2pm. Yediyurappa's son BY Raghavendra is the sitting MP from Shivamogga and has been re-nominated. *—PTI*

DECOMPOSED WOMAN'S LEGS FOUND NEAR BANNERGHATTA

BENGALURU, 15 MARCH

The decomposed legs of a woman estimated to be around 30 years old were found in Anekal taluk near Bannerghatta on the outskirts of Bengaluru.

The legs were found first by locals during their morning walk. Miscreants might have murdered the woman elsewhere around 15 to 20 days ago and thrown body parts in different places, according to officials. The motive behind this act remains unclear and Bannerghatta police registered a case. Bannerghatta police, along with forensic experts and a dog squad, conduct an investigation. *—Salar News*

86 SPOKE CENTRES

Phase 2 of Puneeth Rajkumar Scheme launched

BENGALURU, 15 MARCH

Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao launched the second phase of Puneeth Rajkumar Hrudaya Jyoti Scheme in Dharwad on Friday.

The scheme has been implemented on a hub and spoke model. A total of 86 government hospitals, including 71 taluk hospitals, have been made spoke centres and 11 super-specialty hospitals, including Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research, have been made hub centres.

Under the second phase of the heart scheme, blood clot-dissolving Tenecteplase injection will be given at spoke centres such as taluk hospitals if the condition is critical. This prevents sudden cardiac arrest and buys time for patients to be shifted to a super-specialty hospital which is a hub centre.

Under the second phase of the heart scheme, blood clot-dissolving Tenecteplase injection will be given at spoke centres *PHOTO: PTI*

The spoke centres will employ AI technology by Tricog Health to determine whether the patient is critical or not. If a person with chest pain visits the spoke centres, the AI technology predicts acute heart attack within six minutes after observing ECG levels.

- The spoke centres will employ AI technology by Tricog Health to determine whether the patient is critical or not. the AI predicts acute heart attack in six minutes

Two-day CCLS (Coronary Care Life Support) training and one-day STLS (Safe Transport Life Support) training will be given by Jeevaraksha Trust to medical and para-medical staff for better and quality management of patients suffering from heart attack. As many as 41 Automated External Defibrillator (AED) devices will be installed in public places such as bus stands, railway stations, airports, court complexes, and hospitals to prevent sudden cardiac deaths in the State.

The scheme is launched in remembrance of Kannada actor Dr Puneeth Rajkumar, who passed away due to cardiac arrest in 2021. *—Salar News*

India looks into evacuating citizens from Haiti

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

India on Friday said it is looking at evacuating up to 90 of its nationals from Haiti in view of the deteriorating security situation in the Caribbean nation. Various gangs have launched coordinated attacks on key installations in Haiti in an attempt to force the resignation of the country's embattled Prime Minister Ariel Henry. There are between 75 and 90 Indians in Haiti and about 60 of them have registered with Indian authorities to return to India "if need be", External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson(MEA) Randhir Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing. India doesn't have an embassy in Haiti and the situation in the country is being monitored by the Indian mission at Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic. MEA has already opened c ontrol rooms and established emergency helpline numbers in Santo Domingo as well as in New Delhi. The Indian embassy in Santo Domingo said it is in touch with all Indians in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince and other parts of the country. *—PTI*

Punjab Cong MLA Chabbewal quits party, joins AAP

CHANDIGARH, 15 MARCH

In a setback to the Congress ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, senior party leader from Punjab and MLA Raj Kumar Chabbewal on Friday quit the party and joined the ruling Aam Aadmi Party. The 54-year-old Chabbewal said he has quit as a legislator from Chabbewal assembly constituency in Hoshiarpur district. The prominent Dalit leader was the Deputy Leader of Opposition in the Punjab Assembly. He joined the AAP here and was welcomed into the party fold by Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann. Chabbewal is the second Congress leader from Punjab to join the AAP within a week. Gurpreet Singh GP, a former Congress MLA had recently joined the AAP. In a post in on X, the AAP state unit said the party has been further strengthened with the joining of Chabbewal. *—PTI*

BRS MLA's brother held in illegal mining case

HYDERABAD, 15 MARCH

A BRS MLA's brother was arrested in connection with a case over alleged illegal mining, Sangareddy district police said on Friday. Patancheru Constituency MLA G Mahipal Reddy's brother, G Madhusudhan Reddy, was arrested after a case was registered against him for alleged illegal and excess mining in the district by the companies owned by him, police said. BRS termed the arrest as a political vendetta by the ruling Congress.Based on the complaint by Tahsildar, a case was registered and Madhusudhan Reddy was taken into custody, a police official said. *—PTI*

Nitish expands his cabinet, inducts 21 ministers

PATNA, 15 MARCH

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Friday expanded his cabinet, which is less than two months old, by inducting 21 ministers. The new inductees, including senior BJP leader and former deputy chief minister Renu Devi, were administered the oath of office by Governor Rajendra Arlekar at a ceremony in the Raj Bhavan. Other notable people who were sworn in include Mangal Pandey and Neeraj Kumar Singh 'Bablu', both former ministers, belonging to BJP. Besides, Md Zama Khan, who became the lone Muslim in the cabinet, and the Chief Minister's confidant Ashok Chaudhary, who held cabinet berths earlier, were back as ministers. The fresh induction raises to 30 the total strength of the cabinet formed after the return of Kumar, who heads the JD(U), to the BJP-led NDA less than two months ago. Chants of 'Jai Shri Ram' by leaders of BJP, which has returned to power, reverberated through the Raj Bhavan.*—PTI*

Electoral bonds: Rs 1-cr bonds take lion's share

Rs 1K bonds accounted for just 0.0001% of total share

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

Corporate donations worth thousands of crores to political parties through now-scrapped electoral bonds may have hit the headlines, but there were also 132 such bonds of just Rs 1,000 each bought by individuals as well as corporates, including behemoth ITC Ltd.

Together, these bonds were worth Rs 1.32 lakh, accounting for a minuscule 0.0001 per cent of the total value of 18,871 bonds worth Rs 12,155 crore, details of which have been made public by the Election Commission of India.

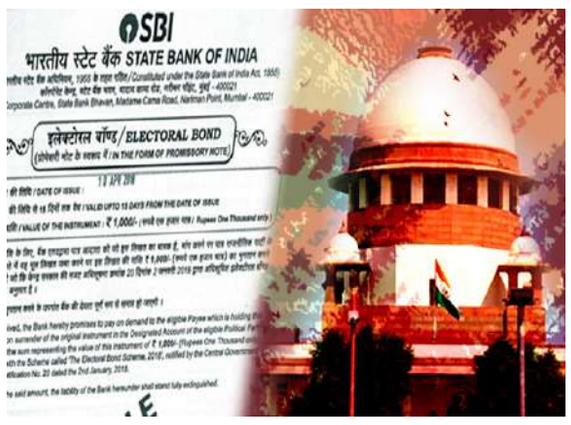
On the other hand, as many as 11,671 bonds of the highest Rs 1 crore denomination were purchased in nearly a four-year period beginning April 12, 2019, and they accounted for a whopping 96 per cent of the overall value of all such bonds bought for making donations to various political parties.

While mostly corporates, including established names and little-known ones, went for the top-denomination bonds, there were also several individuals who bought multiple such bonds.

These also included big industrialists such as Lakshmi Niwas Mittal, Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Rahul Bhatia, as also common-sounding names like Saurabh Gupta, Unnikrishnan K, Raju Kumar Sharma, Tavinder Singh Kohli, Rahul Jagannath Joshi, Kanwar Lal Patni, Raunak Gupta, Anita Hemant Shah, Ashok Kumar Modi and Avinash Modi.

The data also showed people and corporates buying bonds of several denominations, the lowest of Rs 1,000, the next biggest Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore.

Those who purchased Rs 1,000 bonds included Raipur Bottling Company, Ray Constructions Ltd and Dhruv Cotton Processing Pvt Ltd, among corporate entities in addition to the behemoth ITC Ltd.



The data also showed people and corporates buying bonds of several denominations, the lowest of Rs 1,000 ***PHOTO: PTI***

The individual buyers of the smallest value bonds included Abhijeet Soloman Kamble, Poonam Agarwal, N Ramamoorthy, Anand Agarwal, Ritesh Agarwal, Damini Nath and Sourabh Kumar Roy.

The number of Rs 10,000 bonds sold during the period stood at 220, accounting for less than 0.002 per cent of the total value and their purchasers were mostly individuals and little-known companies, along with a few big names such as ITC and Geojit Investment Services.

The number of Rs 1 lakh bonds purchased stood at 2,228 and their buyers included one person named 'Monika', the only one to go with a single name. *—PTI*

RELIANCE SAYS QWIK NOT ITS SUBSIDIARY

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

Qwik Supply Chain Private Limited, a little-known company with registered address at Navi Mumbai's Dhirubhai Ambani Knowledge City (DAKC) and having links to Reliance Industries, was the third largest donor to political parties using electoral bonds.

It bought Rs 410 crore of electoral bonds between financial years 2021-22 and 2023-24 but Reliance said the company is not a subsidiary of any Reliance entity.Electoral bond purchases and donations by Qwik Supply were behind Rs 1,368 crore of Future Gaming and Hotel Services - another little-known lottery company - and Rs 966 crore of Hyderabad-based Megha Engineering & Infra, according to information uploaded by the Election Commission on its website.The firm had a revenue of over Rs 500 crore in 2022-23 but profit numbers were not known.

A Reliance Industries spokesperson in response to a detailed questionnaire, said: "Qwik Supply Chain Pvt Ltd is not a subsidiary of any Reliance entity." *—PTI*

Rags-to-riches story of Lottery King

CHENNAI, 15 MARCH

Santiago Martin, who has emerged to be the top buyer of electoral bonds as per the Election Commission, has been under the ED radar for years. Also known as the "Lottery King", Martin's Future Games and Hotel Services bought electoral bonds worth Rs 1,368 crore. Martin, based in Coimbatore in western Tamil Nadu, is said to have started his life as a 'labourer,' and has a rags-to-riches story behind him.

In 2019, an accountant of a college in Coimbatore run by Martin was found dead following questioning by income tax authorities.

His company, the Future Gaming Solutions India Pvt Ltd, is the master distributor of Sikkim lotteries. Martin is known to have friends in several political parties in many states including Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

In 2023, ED froze assets worth about Rs 457 crore over an alleged loss of over Rs 900 crore to the Sikkim government by way of a fraudulent lottery sale in Kerala. *—PTI*

4 firms buy ₹87cr electoral bonds

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

Financial services firms like Bajaj Finance, Piramal Enterprises, and Edelweiss Group together purchased electoral bonds worth Rs 87 crore between 1 April, 2019 and January 2024.

Piramal Enterprises, PHL Finvest Pvt Ltd and Piramal Capital and Housing Finance bought bonds worth Rs 60 crore during the period. It was followed by three entities of Edelweiss Group, subscribing to Rs 4 crore bonds, while Bajaj Finance purchased bonds worth Rs 20 crore. Gold loan financier Muthoot Finance subscribed electoral bonds worth Rs 3 crore during the period. However, the names of the recipient political parties were not disclosed. When reached, these companies did not offer immediate comment. *—PTI*

AHEAD OF POLLS

Prime Minster Narendra Modi waves at crowd during a roadshow, at Malkajgiri in Hyderabad, on Friday ***PHOTO: PTI***

DMK enemy of TN's future: PM

KANNIYAKUMARI/ HYDERABAD 15 MARCH

Launching a blistering attack on the ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday called the Dravidian party an 'enemy' of the state's future and charged it with harbouring hatred towards the country, its culture and heritage.

He lashed out at the Opposition INDIA bloc and said all it had to show was "scams" running to several crores of rupees, and said his party-led NDA had public initiatives as achievements to boast of.

He also held a massive roadshow in the Medchal Malkajgiri district in Hyderabad as part of the BJP's election campaign.

He was accompanied by State BJP President and Secunderabad Lok Sabha candidate G Kishan Reddy, Malkajgiri Lok Sabha seat candidate Etala Rajender and BJP Vice-President Dr K Laxman. Modi is also scheduled to address two public meetings at Nagarkurnool today and Jagtial on Monday.

Modi to visit Andhra Pradesh on Sunday

Modi is set to visit Andhra Pradesh on Sunday and will attend an NDA election meeting in Palnadu district, BJP National General Secretary Vinod Tawde. Tawde, who addressed a press conference at BJP's Vijayawada office here, said the meeting which will be led by Modi will be held in Chilakaluripeta in Palnadu.TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu and Janasena Chief Pawan Kalyan will also take part in the meeting, marking the first NDA election meeting in Andhra Pradesh in the run-up to the 2024 polls. *—ANI/PTI*

SHAH BEGINS POLL CAMPAIGN IN GUJARAT

AHMEDABAD, 15 MARCH

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who has been renominated for the Gandhinagar Lok Sabha, began his poll campaign on Friday and asked BJP workers to tell voters that this election is about Bharat and not their party.

Shah appealed to his party cadres to contact each and every voter during the poll campaign and ensure that they press the "lotus button (on EVM)".

"Tell people that this election is not about Bharatiya Janata Party, but for Bharat," he said.Prime Minister Modi during his 10-year tenure has made the entire country not only prosperous but also safe by dealing strictly with terrorism, Naxalism and infiltrators, he said.

He said the main issue of this Lok Sabha election is to make India great and urged cadres to ensure victory in more than 400 seats in the upcoming general election.

In 2019, Shah won from the Gandhinagar constituency by defeating Congress candidate CJ Chavda, who is now with the BJP, by over 5 lakh votes. The opposition Congress, which has entered into a seat-sharing agreement with AAP, is yet to announce its candidate for the seat.

Only AAP can finish off BJP: Kejri

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday launched AAP's Lok Sabha election campaign in Gujarat, where he said only his party can finish off the ruling BJP from the country.

He also urged people to help his party win the two Lok Sabha seats that it is contesting in Gujarat so that the issues faced by them can be raised in Parliament.

Of the 26 Lok Sabha constituencies in Gujarat, AAP is fighting two seats as part of the INDIA bloc, while ally Congress is contesting the remaining 24 seats. *—PTI*

TELANGANA: BRS-BSP TO SHARE 2 SEATS OUT OF 17

Hyderabad, 15 March

BSP will contest the Hyderabad and Nagarkurnool Lok Sabha seats, out of the total 17 constituencies in Telangana, as part of its alliance with the K Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR)-led BRS. BRS and BSP on 5 March announced a pre-poll alliance for the LS polls following talks between KCR and state BSP President RS Praveen Kumar.Claiming secularism is in danger in the country, Praveen Kumar had said his party has decided to work together with BRS to safeguard state from the BJP and also "Congress, which is becoming like BJP." *—PTI*

ED'S ACTIONS

Court refuses Kejri's plea to stay summons

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

A sessions court on Friday refused to stay the proceedings against Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal before a magisterial court on the ED's complaint against him for skipping summons in a money laundering case linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam.

Additional Sessions Judge Rakesh Syal directed Kejriwal to approach the metropolitan magistrate for exemption from personal appearance in the matter.

Kejriwal had moved the sessions court against the order passed by Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Divya Malhotra asking him to appear before her on 16 March.

Arvind Kejriwal has till date skipped eight summonses issued by the agency ***PHOTO: ANI***

- Kejriwal had moved the sessions court against the order passed asking him to appear before her on 16 March

Enforcement Directorate has filed two complaints before the magisterial c ourt seeking Kejriwal's prosecution for skipping multiple summonses issued to him in the case.

The latest complaint pertains to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convenor not honouring summonses no. 4 to 8 sent by the federal probe agency under Section 50 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), ED the said.

The ED had earlier moved the magisterial court seeking Kejriwal's prosecution for not attending the first three summonses issued to him in the money laundering case linked to the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy.

The court of ACMM Malhotra has listed the matter (regarding summonses no. 1 to 3) for hearing on 16 March, along with the other complaint.

Kejriwal has till date skipped eight summonses issued by the agency. *— PTI*

Sandeshkhali victims meet Prez, seek her intervention

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

As many as 11 victims of violence including five women from Sandeshkhali met President Droupadi Murmu, in Rashtrapati Bhawan on Friday and sought her intervention "to safeguard the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe community" in Sandeshkhali, West Bengal.

Dr Partha Biswas, Director of the Center for SC/ST Support and Research said that the victims submitted a memorandum to President Murmu.

According to the Memorandum, the Sandeskhali victims urged the President's intervention to safeguard the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe community in Sandeskhali.

"We hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. We pray for your urgent intervention to safeguard the marginalized families from Sandeshkhali, West Bengal. The victims belong to the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe community and have been subjected to severe oppression and injustice," the Memorandum stated.

It further stated that the circumstances surrounding these families' situation are deeply distressing and require immediate attention and intervention.

The women of Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas district erupted in protests and came out on the streets, accusing expelled TMC MLA Sheikh Shahjahan and his aides of grave excesses and atrocities.Multiple women on the island accused Shajahan and his aides of "land-grab and sexual assault" under coercion. *— ANI*

National Commission for Women Chairperson Rekha Sharma meets with President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday ***PHOTO: ANI***

- According to the Memorandum, the Sandeskhali victims urged the President's intervention to safeguard the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe community in Sandeskhali

BJP DEMANDS PROBE

She felt sensation of push: Docs on Didi's fall

KOLKATA, 15 MARCH

A day after stating that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had a fall at her Kalighat residence "due to some push from behind" leading to injuries on forehead and nose, state-run SSKM Hospital Director Manimoy Bandyopadhyay on Friday clarified that all he meant was that Banerjee may have felt "a sensation of push."

Banerjee, 69, suffered a grievous injury on her forehead and nose during a fall inside her Kalighat residence in South Kolkata on Thursday evening.

She underwent three stitches on her forehead and one on her nose and was discharged following necessary medical tests, including radio imaging of her brain and ECG, at the hospital.

Mamata Banerjee had a cerebral concussion and a sharp cut on her forehead and nose ***PHOTO: PTI***

Asked about the speculations over her fall, a police officer said, "As of now, there has been no complaint lodged in connection with her fall. We have increased the security around Banerjee's residence."

Reacting to the incident, BJP on Friday demanded a thorough probe into Banerjee's fall at her residence drawing a sharp retort from the ruling TMC which asked the saffron camp not to politicise the matter.

STMC leader and West Bengal Minister Shashi Panja said the matter should not be politicised.

"When you feel unwell at times you tend to fall and have this feeling that someone has pushed you. It is very normal in medical science. The doctor later clarified what he meant and we all have seen the pictures of the chief minister bleeding, so we would request not to politicise the matter," she said.

Banerjee, who has been advised bed rest, was reported to be clinically "stable" as doctors said they were planning to carry out a few routine checks, a senior official of the SSKM hospital said. *—PTI*

- BJP on Friday demanded a thorough probe into Banerjee's fall at her residence drawing a sharp retort from the ruling TMC which asked the saffron camp not to politicise the matter

SC to hear pleas for stay on CAA

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

Supreme Court on Friday agreed to hear pleas seeking a direction to the Centre to stay the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Rules, 2024 till the pendency of petitions challenging the constitutional validity of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 before the apex court.

A bench comprising Chief Justice (CJI) DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra took note of the submissions of senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the Indian Union Muslim League, that once the citizenship is granted to migrant Hindus, it cannot be taken back and hence the issues needed an early hearing.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said there were 237 petitions and in those pending ones, four interim applications have been filed against the implementation of the rules. *—PTI*

- There were 237 petitions and in those pending ones, four interim applications have been filed against the implementation of the rules

PHOTO: PTI

Former-Navy chief Admiral Ramdas passes away

HYDERABAD, 15 MARCH

Former Indian Navy chief Admiral (retd) L Ramdas passed away in a military hospital here on Friday, Defence sources said. Ramdas,90, served as navy chief between December 1990 and September 1993. He passed away due to age related issues, they said. Ramdas is survived by his wife Lalita Ramdas and three daughters.—*ANI*

Nursing student found dead in UP's Etawah

ETAWAH 15 MARCH

The body of a 20-year-old female nursing student of the Saifai Medical College was found from a spot near the Etawah-Saifai road, police said on Friday. According to Etawah Superintendent of Police Santosh Kumar Verma, it appears that the woman was killed and the body dumped at the spot on Thursday evening. The deceased had an injury mark on her neck, the officer said, adding that the body has been sent for post-mortem. The deceased was a third-year student of the nursing course. One of her friends alerted the warden when she did not turn up for her class on Thursday afternoon, police said. Students of the college staged a protest on the campus, demanding swift action in the matter.Samajwadi Party (SP) president and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Akhilesh Yadav slammed the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government in the state over the incident.—*PTI*

India's first underwater metro opens for public

KOLKATA, 15 MARCH

The newly-inaugurated India's first underwater metro line began public operations in West Bengal's capital Kolkata on Friday with commuters seen queueing up for the first ride on the country's first-ever train ride under water.People were seen clapping and raising 'Vande Bharat' and 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' slogans as they travelled in the country's first underwater metro train, an engineering marvel. A train began its journey from the Howrah Maidan station on the East-West metro corridor of Kolkata at 7am on Friday. Simultaneously another train started from Esplanade station at the same time.The Howrah Maidan-Esplanade section of the Kolkata's metropolitan transportation network is situated beneath the Hooghly River. The under-river section of the tunnel is 520 metres long.—*ANI*

2 Coast Guards held for allegedly raping colleague's daughter

MUMBAI, 15 MARCH

Two employees of the Indian Coast Guard have been arrested for allegedly raping their colleague's 15-year-old daughter in Mumbai, a police official said on Friday. The incident took place on 17 October of last year in the house of one of the two accused in a northern suburb of the city. The girl is a Class 10 student, while the accused Coast Guard employees are aged 30 and 23, the official said. On the day of the alleged sexual assault, the teenager had returned from her coaching class and was alone in their home as her mother, younger sister and brothers had gone to attend a function and her father was on night duty. When the girl entered the flat of the accused, a second person who was already waiting inside gagged her and dragged the teenager to the bedroom. The duo then allegedly raped the girl, the official said.—*PTI*

Neurological conditions lead cause of ill health: Lancet

This affected 3.4 billion people in 2021, many of whom were disabled

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

Neurological conditions such as epilepsy, Alzheimer's disease and dementia are now the leading cause of ill health and disability globally, affecting 3.4 billion people in 2021, according to a major new analysis published in The Lancet Neurology journal.

Globally, the number of people living with, or dying from, neurological conditions such as stroke, Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, and meningitis has risen substantially over the past 30 years. This is due to the growth and ageing of the global population as well as increased exposure to environmental, metabolic, and lifestyle risk factors, the researchers said.

The study suggests that worldwide, the overall amount of disability, illness, and premature death -- a measurement known as disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) -- caused by neurological conditions increased by 18 per cent over the past 31 years, rising from around 375 million years of healthy life lost in 1990 to 443 million years in 2021.

The analysis from the Global Burden of Disease, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD) 2021 shows that the absolute number of DALYs is increasing in large part due to ageing and growing populations worldwide.

The top 10 contributors to neurological health loss in 2021 were stroke, neonatal encephalopathy (brain injury), migraine, Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, diabetic neuropathy (nerve damage), meningitis, epilepsy, neurological complications from preterm birth, autism spectrum disorder, and nervous system cancers, the researchers said. Neurological consequences of Covid-19 (cognitive impairment and Guillain-Barre syndrome) ranked 20th, accounting for 2.48 million years of healthy life lost in 2021, they said.

The most prevalent neurological disorders in 2021 were tension-type headaches (around two billion cases) and migraines (about 1.1 billion cases). Diabetic neuropathy is the fastest-growing of all neurological conditions, the researchers said.

The top 10 contributors to neurological health loss in 2021 were stroke, brain injury, migraine, Alzheimer's disease and dementia PHOTO: FREEPIK

- The most prevalent neurological disorders in 2021 were tension-type headaches (around 2 billion cases) and migraines (about 1.1 billion cases)

"The number of people with diabetic neuropathy has more than tripled globally since 1990, rising to 206 million in 2021," said study co-senior author Liane Ong from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), University of Washington, US.

"This is in line with the increase in the global prevalence of diabetes," Ong said in a statement.

The research builds on previous GBD study to provide the largest and most comprehensive analysis to compare the prevalence and burden of nervous system disorders between countries on a global scale between 1990 and 2021. —*PTI*

EXAM ON 18 MARCH

SC rejects plea on postponing NEET-MDS test

T'PURAM, 9 MARCH

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to postpone entrance examination for NEET-MDS which is scheduled to be on Monday, 18 March 2024.

The court rejected entertaining the plea from dentists, who want the examination to be scheduled on 7 July 2024.

The bench of Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice of India(CJI) DY Chanfdrachud, Manoj Misra and JD Pardiwala said that over 28,000 candidates will be appearing of the examination and petitioners have moved the court at the last minute.

The petition also sought extension of internship completion deadline of 31 March in order to be eligible to sit in the examination. The court replied saying that the concern was taken care of by the government and the internship deadline was extended till 30 June.

The court said it will be inappropriate to intervene at this stage considering judicial review, hence it declines to answer. On 21 February the apex court has passed order on separate set of petitions filed by 11 dentist, raising similar pleas on extension of deadline for internship.

—*Salar News*

The court rejected entertaining the plea from dentists, who want the examination to be rescheduled PHOTO: PTI

Lanka detains 15 Indian fishermen for 'poaching'

COLOMBO, 15 MARCH

The Sri Lanka Navy on Friday detained at least 15 Indian fishermen off the coast of Karainagar in the northern Jaffna Peninsula for allegedly fishing in the island nation's waters, an official statement said, in the latest such incident this year.

The fishermen and their trawler were escorted by the navy to the Kankesanturai port and handed over to the fishing directorate for further action.

In recent weeks, Sri Lankan fishermen have protested against the authorities to protect their rights from the alleged poaching by their Indian counterparts in the Sri Lankan waters.

With this arrest, the total number of Indian fishing trawlers confiscated by the navy in 2024 so far has risen to 16 with 225 fishermen being detained for poaching, the Sri Lanka Navy said.

The fishermen issue is a contentious one in the ties between India and Sri Lanka, with Lankan Navy personnel even firing at Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait and seizing their boats in several alleged incidents of illegally entering Sri Lankan territorial waters.

There have been periodic instances of Indian fishermen being arrested by Sri Lankan authorities for allegedly crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line and fishing in Sri Lankan waters. In 2023, the island nation's Navy arrested 240 Indian fishermen along with 35 trawlers. —*PTI*

'PRODUCTIVE TALKS'

Tobgay calls India 'reliable partner', PM to visit Bhutan soon

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

Bhutanese Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay has conveyed to his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi his deep appreciation for India's role as a reliable, trusted and valued partner in Bhutan's developmental priorities.

Tobgay, who is on a five-day visit to India, said this during wide-ranging talks he and Prime Minister Modi held on Thursday evening.

Modi is visiting Bhutan next week.

In their talks, the two leaders reviewed progress in bilateral ties in various areas, including infrastructure development, connectivity, energy, hydropower cooperation, people-to-people exchanges and development cooperation, according to an official readout.

"They (Modi and Tobgay) reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen the special and unique India-Bhutan friendship," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. "The prime minister accepted the invitation," it said.

Modi holds 'productive' talks with Bhutanese counterpart

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Bhutanese counterpart Tshering Tobgay PHOTO: PTI

Modi held 'productive' talks with his Bhutanese counterpart

Tobgay focusing on various aspects of "unique and special partnership" between India and Bhutan.

After his talks with Tobgay, Modi said he conveyed "heartfelt thanks" to the Bhutanese King and the Prime Minister for inviting him to visit Bhutan next week.

The talks took place hours after Tobgay arrived here on a five-day visit to India, his first foreign trip after assuming the charge of the top office in January.

Officials said Modi and Tobgay carried out a comprehensive review of the overall ties between the two countries.

In a statement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Wednesday said Tobgay's visit will provide an opportunity to the two sides to review the progress in the "unique partnership" and to discuss ways to expand the "enduring" ties of friendship and cooperation between India and Bhutan.

Tobgay's visit to India came against the backdrop of China and Bhutan looking at an expeditious resolution of their festering boundary row that could have implications for India's security interests.

President Droupadi Murmu on Friday said India deeply values its multi-faceted partnership with Bhutan and the spiritual heritage of Buddhism connects the two countries. The President said Bhutan can count on India as a reliable friend and partner. —*PTI*

SC to examine giving symbols on first come, first served basis

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

The Supreme Court on Friday sought a response from the Election Commission on a plea by a Tamil Nadu-based unrecognised political party-Naam Tamilar Katchi-challenging the allotment of free symbols to unrecognised political parties on first come, first served (FCFS) basis.

A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra also issued a notice to another unrecognised political party that was granted the poll symbol on which Naam Tamilar Katchi (NTK) had contested elections in the past.

The High Court had on 1 March dismissed the NTK's petition challenging the allotment of free symbols by the poll panel to unrecognised political parties on first come, first served basis.

PHOTO: ANI

It had rejected the NTK's contention that the Election Symbols Order to this effect was arbitrary and unconstitutional, saying a contrary view would operate against the very essence of having free symbols.

The petitioner was aggrieved by the allotment of free symbol 'ganna kisan' (sugarcane farmer) to another political party in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

While issuing the notice on the petition, the CJI said the appeal will be taken up for hearing after the Holi vacation.

The top court said it will examine the scheme of Paragraph 10B (B) of the Election Symbols Order which deals with grant of free symbols to parties and candidates on FCFS basis.

It had rejected the NTK's contention that the Election Symbols Order to this effect was arbitrary and unconstitutional, saying a contrary view would operate against the very essence of having free symbols. —*PTI*

SC refuses to stay appointments of ECs

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to stay the appointments of new election commissioners (ECs) under a 2023 law that excluded the chief justice of India from the selection panel.

A bench of justices Sanjiv Khanna, Dipankar Datta and Augustine George Masih told the petitioners, who pointed out that a meeting for the selection of ECs was pre-poned, to file a separate application pointing out the fact.

Refusing to stay the appointments made in accordance with the 2023 law, the bench said, "Normally and generally, we do not stay a law by way of an interim order."It deferred the hearing on a batch of pleas challenging the appointment of two ECs under the 2023 law.

Senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing in the court on behalf of petitioner Jaya Thakur, said when a judgment is passed, there cannot be any transgression.

He contended that there was a transgression in the Chief Election Commissioner and other EC (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023. Former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Sandhu were appointed as election commissioners on Thursday. —*PTI*

SC junks plea alleging irregularities in EVMs

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

"Every method has its plus and minus points," the Supreme Court on Friday said as it refused to entertain a plea alleging irregularities in the functioning of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna, Dipankar Datta and Augustine George Masih said this court has already examined several petitions time and again and dealt with various issues related to the functioning of EVMs.

"How many petitions shall we entertain? Recently, we have dealt with a plea related to VVPAT. We cannot go by assumptions. Every method has its plus and minus points. Sorry, we cannot entertain this under Article 32," the bench told petitioner Nandini Sharma, appearing in-person.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

The bench recorded in the order that the issue raised in the petition has been examined by the apex court in various petitions.

Justice Khanna said more than 10 cases have been examined on the issue by the court time and again. Sharma has arrayed the Election Commission of India and six political parties as party in her plea. —*PTI*

Shraddha's murder accused gets respite

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

The Delhi High Court on Friday directed the Tihar Jail Authorities to unlock accused Aaftab Poonawala for eight hours during the time and lodge him in a solitary cell in the night.

Aftab is presently lodged in Tihar Jail for allegedly killing his live-in partner Shraddha Walkar, a 27-year-old woman in Delhi on 18 May, 2022.

The court direction came while hearing a habeas corpus plea moved by the accused Poonawala stating that he is being unlocked only for two hours a day, one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening and for rest 22 hours he is being kept in a solitary cell of Tihar Jail.

His lawyer further stated that the other Jail inmates are unlocked for eight hours a day.

The Division Bench of Justice Suresh Kumar Kait and Justice Girish Kathpalia after passing the direction to Tihar Jail authorities, disposed of the plea.

Saket court last year started the trial in the murder case of Shraddha Walkar, killed allegedly by her live-in partner Aaftab Poonawala who chopped her body into pieces and scattered them at various places.

The trial Court earlier had framed charges against Aaftab on 9 May for offences under IPC sections 302 (murder) and 201 (causing disappearance of evidence of offence). —*ANI*

BOOST FOR ARMY

Apache chopper takes flight near Pakistan border

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

In a major capability boost, the Indian Army on Friday raised its first Apache attack helicopter squadron in the desert sector in Jodhpur near the Pakistan front.

The squadron was raised today in Jodhpur in the presence of Director General Indian Army Aviation Lt Gen Ajay Suri and officials from the original manufacturer Boeing along with other senior officials, Indian Army Officials told ANI.

The Indian Army Apache helicopters would camouflage desert colours and the first batch of choppers would arrive and join the fleet by May this year, they said.

There is a slight delay in view of the ongoing global security situation but they are now on track, the officials said.

Earlier, the Indian Army has signed a contract to acquire six Apache helicopters from the US.

Army's Apache helicopters can camouflage into desert colours and the first batch of choppers will arrive and join the fleet by May PHOTO: PTI

Also known as the 'tanks in the air', these advanced attack helicopters will land at the Indian Air Force's (IAF) Hindon Air Force Station and then will be deployed in Jodhpur in May, near the India-Pakistan border, the officials added.

The Army Aviation Corps, which currently operates utility helicopters such as the Dhruv and Chetak, earlier inducted the indigenously developed Light Combat Helicopters (LCH) Prachand at Missamari, Assam last year.

Notably, the IAF already operates a fleet of 22 Apache helicopters which have been deployed on the eastern and western fronts. —*ANI*

- The squadron was raised today in Jodhpur in the presence of Director General Indian Army Aviation Lt Gen Ajay Suri and officials from the original manufacturer Boeing along with other senior officials

WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

The photograph of a football covered in goose barnacles, by Ryan Stalker is the winner of this year's British Wildlife Photography Awards. The picture was chosen from more than 14,000 entries by both amateur and professional photographers
PHOTO: RYAN STALKER/BBC NEWS

Are claims about other nations' minorities true?

CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT ACT (CAA)

Pakistani Hindus who moved to India in recent years have said that hey face social and religious discrimination, with a particular issue being the targeting of Hindu girls in Sindh province
PHOTO: BBC

In light of Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), it offers citizenship to non-Muslim minorities from three neighbouring countries.

Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians who have entered India illegally before 31 December 2014 can apply for citizenship if they can prove they originate from Muslim-majority Pakistan, Bangladesh or Afghanistan.

The law has been criticised as discriminatory because the same right has not been granted to Muslims who have come to India from other countries.

The government argues that minorities in those Muslim-majority countries are dwindling, and that they face persecution on the grounds of their faith.

How many Hindus and other non-Muslims?

Home Minister Amit Shah has argued that Pakistan's non-Muslim population has dwindled dramatically since 1951.

This follows the mass exodus of non-Muslims from the newly-created Pakistan after partition in 1947 and the flight of Muslims from India to Pakistan.

In his most recent remarks, Shah has cited a figure for Hindus in Pakistan of 23 per cent of the population in 1951, which he says had then shrunk to 3.7 per cent due to persecution.He also cited a figure for Hindus in Bangladesh of 22 per cent in 1951, which he said had gone down to 10 per cent in 2011.

But Shah's figures don't appear to take into account the fact that the 1951 data (from the first census held after partition) includes both West and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), which until 1971 were one country.

According to the 1951 census data, Hindus constituted 1.6 per cent of the population of the former West Pakistan and 22 per cent in the former East Pakistan.

The relatively small Hindu population in Pakistan has not really changed significantly from the 1951 figure of 1.6 per cent as the 2017 official census data shows a Hindu population of just 1.7 per cent.With other minorities added, that figure increases to over 3 per cent, closer to the figure Shah cited as just being for Hindus.

In Bangladesh, the data does suggest that the Hindu population fell significantly - from around 22 per cent in 1951 to around 8 per cent in 2022.

There are other non-Muslim religious minorities in Pakistan and Bangladesh, such as Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Parsis.

And in Pakistan, there are also Ahmadis, who were declared non-Muslim by the government in the 1970s, and are estimated to be around four million strong, making them the largest religious minority in the country.

In Afghanistan, non-Muslim groups include Hindus, Sikhs, Bahais and Christians, and make up less than 0.3 per cent of the population.

What's the official status of non-Muslims?

The act states: "The constitutions of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh provide for a specific state religion. As a result, many persons belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities have faced persecution on grounds of religion in those countries. "It's true that the state religion of Pakistan is Islam. Afghanistan is also an Islamic state.

In Bangladesh, the situation is more complicated. The country came into being in 1971 with a secular constitution, but in 1988 Islam was made the official state religion.

A lengthy legal battle to get that reversed ended in 2016 when Bangladesh's top court ruled that Islam should remain the state religion.

However, all these countries have constitutional provisions stating that non-Muslims have rights and are free to practise their faith. And individual Hindus have risen to prominent positions in both Pakistan and Bangladesh, notably as chief justices in the two countries.

In practice, non-Muslim minorities do face discrimination and persecution

Pakistani Hindus who moved to India in recent years have told the BBC they face social and religious discrimination, with a particular issue being the targeting of Hindu girls in Sindh province.

But it's also true that Ahmadis, who are not covered by India's citizenship act, face discrimination for their beliefs as they are regarded as heretical by the Muslim majority in Pakistan.In Bangladesh, there are various reasons for the decline in the proportion of Hindus over the years.

The better-off Hindu population have had their homes and businesses targeted, sometimes in attempts to get them to leave so their land or assets can be taken over. Hindus have also been the targets of attacks by religious militants.

The Bangladesh government has previously rejected India's claims about minorities being targeted. Former foreign minister Abdul Monem had told the BBC in 2019: "We don't have examples of minorities being persecuted in this country.

—BBC News

SALAR ساڈھ

Ramadan, Lent fasts could have cardiovascular benefits

Food abstinence is all the rage when it comes to health and wellbeing, it seems. Wherever you look, from the UK's Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, to Hollywood celebrities like Thor star Chris Hemsworth, someone's extolling the virtues of fasting for mind and body.

According to reports, Sunak considers fasting for the first 36 hours of each week as "an important discipline", while Hemsworth attempted to "unlock his body's anti-ageing powers" through an extreme four-day fast for his 2023 TV series, Limitless.

Intermittent fasting has also become a popular form of weight management. Some plans, such as the Daniel Fast popularised by film star Chris Pratt, claim to follow the diets of religious figures to offer spiritual as well as physical rewards.

But, despite the widespread coverage of intermittent fasting over the past few years, religious fasts have not shared the same level of attention. Does following a religious fast have the same or even greater health benefits then fasting purely for health and wellbeing?

Health benefits of fasting for Ramadan and Lent

In 2024 and 2025, Ramadan and the Christian period of Lent overlap. Ramadan is a period of fasting for Muslims, while Lent is a period of abstinence for many Christians, particularly those of Orthodox denominations.

However, the nature of religious fasts varies. During Ramadan, fasting is a form of time-restricted eating – followers should avoid all food and drink between dawn and dusk. Whereas, Orthodox Christian fasting practices tend to focus on excluding all animal products and sources of fat from the diet, rather than a full fast.

With colleagues, I explored the potential health effects of different religious and faith-based fasts. By conducting a systematic review of published data from Muslim and Orthodox Christian communities only, our recent analysis showed that both fasting approaches are associated with a reduction in cardiovascular risk – although for different reasons.

Fasting during Ramadan was associated with a significant reduction in blood pressure and body weight, whereas fasting among Orthodox Christians for Lent showed a significant association with a reduction in cholesterol.

Lower blood pressure among those fasting for Ramadan could be an effect of not eating or drinking during the day, thereby lowering insulin levels which can act on the sympathetic nervous system as well as reducing blood volume.

Orthodox Christians following a plant-based fast may reduce fat intake and increase fibre in comparison to their usual diet, which may explain the association of their Lent fast with lower cholesterol.

Perhaps unsurprisingly given that fasts tend to limit energy intake, fasting for both Ramadan and Lent were also associated with weight loss.However, some of these benefits may be cancelled out by overconsumption of less healthy food and drink when the fast is broken. To maintain the benefits of fasting, followers should avoid eating foods high in fat, sugar and salt.

Aligning healthcare and religious practices

Our review suggests that health professionals could support people to use aspects of their faith, including fasting practices, to support healthier lifestyles. This could include working with faith leaders such as Imams and mosque communities prior to Ramadan, to explore healthy Iftar meals to break the fast.

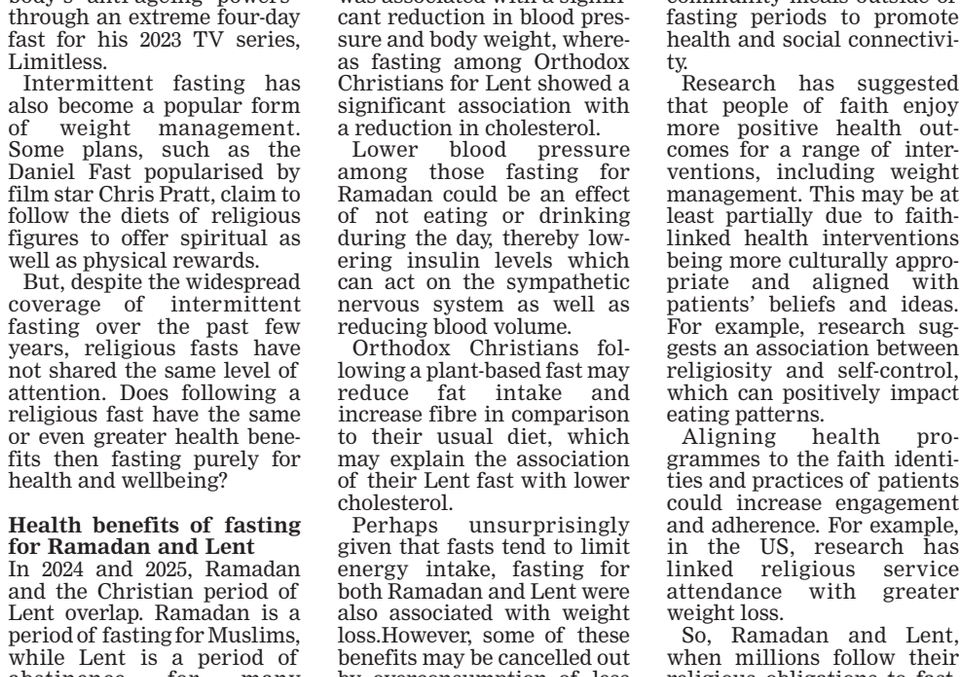
It might even be possible to use aspects of faith to promote self-care as part of religious practice, to improve physical health alongside spiritual growth and identity. For example, religious leaders could encourage healthy community meals outside of fasting periods to promote health and social connectivity.

Research has suggested that people of faith enjoy more positive health outcomes for a range of interventions, including weight management. This may be at least partially due to faith-linked health interventions being more culturally appropriate and aligned with patients' beliefs and ideas. For example, research suggests an association between religiosity and self-control, which can positively impact eating patterns.

Aligning health programmes to the faith identities and practices of patients could increase engagement and adherence. For example, in the US, research has linked religious service attendance with greater weight loss.

So, Ramadan and Lent, when millions follow their religious obligations to fast, may be a good time for health professionals to work with faith groups to develop culturally inclusive approaches. This could help address the challenge of changing health behaviour, as people are more likely to adhere to positive habits if these align with their personal values, including their faith.

—PTI



Aligning health programmes to the faith identities and practices of patients could increase engagement and adherence
PHOTO: PIXABAY

LETTERS

Write to us at salar@salar.news

AI versions of deceased could be a threat to mental health

We all experience loss and grief. Imagine, though, that you don't need to say goodbye to your loved ones. That you can recreate them virtually so you can have conversations and find out how they're feeling.

For Kim Kardashian's fortieth birthday, her then husband, Kanye West, gifted her with a hologram of her dead father, Robert Kardashian. Reportedly, Kim Kardashian reacted with disbelief and joy to the virtual appearance of her father at her birthday party. Being able to see a long-dead, much missed loved one, moving and talking again might offer comfort to those left behind.

After all, resurrecting a deceased loved one might seem miraculous – and possibly more than a little creepy – but what's the impact on our health? Are Artificial Intelligence (AI) ghosts a help or hindrance to the grieving process?

As a psychotherapist researching how AI technology can be used to enhance therapeutic interventions, I am intrigued by the advent of ghostbots. But I'm also more than a little concerned about the potential effects of this technology on the mental health of those using it, especially those who are grieving. Resurrecting dead people as avatars has the potential to cause more harm than good, perpetuating even more confusion, stress, depression, paranoia and, in some cases, psychosis.

Recent developments in AI have led to the creation of ChatGPT and other chatbots that can allow users to have sophisticated human like conversations.

Using deep fake technology, AI software can create an interactive virtual representation of a deceased person by using their digital content such as photographs, emails, and videos.

Some of these creations were just themes in science fiction fantasy only a few years ago but now they are a scientific reality.

Help or hindrance?

Digital ghosts could be a comfort to the bereaved by helping them to reconnect with lost loved ones. They could provide an opportunity for the user to say some things or ask questions they never got a chance to when the now deceased person was alive.

But the ghostbots' uncanny resemblance to a lost loved one may not be as positive as it sounds. Research suggests that deathbots should be used only as a temporary aid to mourning to avoid potentially harmful emotional dependence on the technology.AI ghosts could be harmful for people's mental health by interfering with the grief process.

For American media personality Kim Kardashian's fortieth birthday, her then husband, Kanye West, gifted her with a hologram of her dead father, Robert Kardashian
PHOTO: X/ KIMKARDASHIAN

Grief takes time and there are many different stages that can take place over many years. When newly bereaved, those experiencing grief might think of their deceased loved one frequently. They might freshly recall old memories and it is quite common for a grieving person to dream more intensely about their lost loved one.

The psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud was concerned with how human beings respond to the experience of loss. He pointed out potential added difficulties for those grieving if there's negativity surrounding a death.

- Recent developments in AI have led to the creation of ChatGPT and other chatbots that can allow users to have sophisticated human like conversations

For example, if a person had ambivalent feelings towards someone and they died, the person could be left with a sense of guilt. Or if a person died in horrific circumstances such as a murder, a grieving person might find it more difficult to accept it this.Freud referred to this as "melancholia", but it can also be referred to as "complicated grief". In some extreme cases, a person may experience apparitions and hallucinate that they see the dead person and begin to believe they are alive. AI ghostbots could further traumatise someone experiencing complicated grief and may exacerbate associated problems such as hallucinations.

Chatbot horror

There are also risks that these ghost-bots could say harmful things or give bad advice to someone in mourning. Similar generative software such as ChatGPT chatbots are already widely criticised for giving misinformation to users.

Imagine if the AI technology went rogue and started to make inappropriate remarks to the user – a situation experienced by journalist Kevin Roose in 2023 when a Bing chatbot tried to get him to leave his wife. It would be very hurtful if a deceased father was conjured up as an AI ghost by a son or daughter to hear comments that they weren't loved or liked or weren't their father's favourite.

Or, in a more extreme scenario, if the ghostbot suggested the user join them in death or they should kill or harm someone. This may sound like a plot from a horror film but it's not so far fetched. In 2023, the UK's Labour party outlined a law to prevent the training of AI to incite violence.

This was a response to the attempted assassination of the Queen earlier in the year by a man who was encouraged by his chatbot girlfriend, with whom he had an "emotional and sexual" relationship.

The creators of ChatGPT currently acknowledge that the software makes errors and is still not fully reliable because it fabricates information. Who knows how a person's texts, emails or videos will be interpreted and what content will be generated by this AI technology?

In any event, it appears that no matter how far this technology advances, there will be a need for considerable oversight and human supervision.

Forgetting is healthy

This latest tech says a lot about our digital culture of infinite possibilities with no limits.

Data can be stored on the cloud indefinitely and everything is retrievable and nothing truly deleted or destroyed. Forgetting is an important element of healthy grief but in order to forget, people will need to find new and meaningful ways of remembering the deceased person.

Anniversaries play a key role in helping those who are mourning to not only remember lost loved ones, but they are also opportunities to represent the loss in new ways. Rituals and symbols can mark the end of something that can allow humans to properly remember in order to properly forget.

Courtesy, The Conversation

Russians vote to elect Putin for 6th time

The polls are taking place after crackdown that has given Putin full control of political system

MOSCOW, 15 MARCH

Voters headed to the polls in Russia on Friday for a three-day presidential election that is all but certain to extend President Vladimir Putin's rule by six more years after he stifled dissent.

The election takes place against the backdrop of a ruthless crackdown that has crippled independent media and prominent rights groups and given Putin full control of the political system.

It also comes as Moscow's war in Ukraine enters its third year. Russia has the advantage on the battlefield, where it is making small, if slow, gains. Ukraine, meanwhile, has made Moscow look vulnerable behind the front line: Long-range drone attacks have struck deep inside Russia, while high-tech drones have put its Black Sea fleet on the defensive.

Voters are casting their ballots Friday through Sunday at polling stations across the vast country's 11 time zones, as well as in illegally annexed regions of Ukraine. Russians also can vote online, the first time the option has been used in a presidential contest; more than 200,000 people in Moscow voted online soon after the polls opened, authorities said.

The election holds little suspense since Putin, 71, is running for his fifth term virtually unchallenged. His political opponents are either in jail or in exile abroad, and the fiercest of them, Alexei Navalny, died in a remote Arctic penal colony last month. The three other candidates on the ballot are low-profile politicians from token opposition parties that toe the Kremlin's line.

Observers have little to no expectation that the election will be free and fair. Beyond the fact that voters have been presented with little choice, the possibilities for independent monitoring are very limited.

Only registered candidates or state-backed advisory bodies can assign observers to polling stations, decreasing the likelihood of independent watchdogs. With balloting over three days in nearly 100,000 polling stations in the country, any true monitoring is difficult anyway.

Ukraine and the West have also condemned Russia for holding the vote in Ukrainian regions that Moscow's forces have seized and occupied. The Kremlin banned two politicians from the ballot who sought to run on an anti-war agenda and attracted genuine albeit not overwhelming support, thus depriving the voters of any choice on the "main issue of Russia's political agenda," said political analyst Abbas Gallyamov. —*AP*

Women vote at a polling station during a presidential election in Russian-controlled Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine, on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

Prosecutors open to delaying Trump's 25 March trial

NEW YORK, 15 MARCH

New York prosecutors said on Thursday they are open to delaying the start of Donald Trump's hush-money criminal trial by a month "in an abundance of caution" to give the former president's lawyers time to review evidence they only recently obtained from a previous federal investigation into the matter. The Manhattan district attorney's office said in a court filing that it does not oppose adjourning the trial for 30 days but would fight the defense's push for a longer delay. Judge Juan Manuel Merchan did not immediately rule. Jury selection is scheduled for 25 March. The hush-money case is one of four criminal indictments against Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee. Trump's legal team said it has received tens of thousands of pages of evidence from the US attorney's office in Manhattan in the last two weeks, including records about former Trump lawyer-turned-prosecution witness Michael Cohen.—*AP*

7 miners killed in China coal mine accident

ABEIJING, 15 MARCH

All the seven miners who were trapped since Monday in an underground warehouse of a coal mine in north China's Shanxi Province were confirmed dead, local authorities said Friday. The coal pile in the warehouse collapsed at midnight on Monday when miners were repairing a coal feeder, burying seven people, said Gao Naichun, head of the mine. The last body was retrieved on Friday morning, marking the end of the rescue mission at the coal mine of the Taoyuan Xinlong coal industrial corporation in Zhongyang County, according to the county government. The collapsed coal broke the water pipes under the warehouse and led to water outbursts, which hampered the rescue efforts, Gao said. Further investigation is underway, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. —*BCC News*

Kishida slams ruling party event with scantily-clad dancers

TOKOYO, 15 MARCH

Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has slammed a gathering of ruling party members last November that involved scantily-clad dancers. Leaked footage of the event, organised by a chapter of the Liberal Democratic Party, showed women in swimwear sitting on participants' laps, reports said. The event was "highly inappropriate and most regrettable", said Kishida when grilled by lawmakers on Friday. At least one of the event organisers has since resigned from the party. The women, who are reportedly part of the Osaka and Kyoto-based Glamor Dancers troupe, were asked to use their mouths to receive banknotes hanging from participants' mouths, claimed local media reports. The event was attended by members of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)'s youth division in the western city of Wakayama. One of the organisers, Tetsuya Kawabata, had earlier sought to defend the event by saying that the presence of the "go-go dancers" - referring to dancers employed to entertain crowds in nightclubs - were intended for "diversity". —*BBC News*

KYIV FIRES MORE MISSILES AT RUSSIA ON EVE OF POLLS

MOSCOW, 15 MARCH

Ukraine fired at least eight missiles at Russia's Belgorod border region, killing two people and wounding 12, local officials said on Thursday. This was as Kyiv's forces apparently kept up efforts to rattle the Kremlin on the eve of Russia's presidential election that is taking place amid a ruthless crackdown on dissent.

Also, Ukrainian forces attempted cross-border raids that were repelled in Belgorod and the Kursk region, according to local authorities. The Russian Defence Ministry claimed its troops killed 195 Ukrainian soldiers and destroyed five tanks and four armoured infantry vehicles, two days after saying it killed 234 Ukrainian troops in another border assault. The Ukrainian assaults on Russian territory in recent days, including long-range drone attacks and alleged incursions by Ukraine-based Russian proxies, have come as Russian President Vladimir Putin heads for near-certain reelection. —*AP*

New proof comes up on torture of POWs

GENEVA, 15 MARCH

PHOTO: AP

UN-backed human rights experts said Friday they have gathered new evidence of "horrific" torture of Ukrainian prisoners of war by their Russian jailers, saying such practices could amount to war crimes.

The Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine said human rights violations have been widespread since Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his troops to invade the country more than two years ago, and that civilian suffering from the war continues to mount.

It said Russian forces regularly showed little regard for possible harm to civilians in their military operations, and cited incidents of rape and sexual violence against women as amounting to torture.

Relocation of children from the Kherson region in southern Ukraine to Russian-occupied Crimea did not appear to be temporary, they said, and could amount to the war crime of unlawful transfer.

As for the Ukrainian side, the report cited "a few violations" of human rights by Ukrainian authorities against people suspected of collaborating with Russia.

The commission, mandated by the UN-backed Human Rights Council that is currently in session, said it conducted more than two dozen trips to Ukraine and drew on interviews of more than 1,400 men and women over the last two years.

In one case, a former Ukrainian detainee who was not identified described having his collarbone broken, teeth knocked out and injured foot beaten, among other mistreatment, until "he begged them to kill him," the report said.

After release, he underwent 36 hospitalisations through January this year, it said. —*AP*

'Houthis poses hypersonic missile'

DUBAI, 15 MARCH

Yemen's Houthi rebels claim to have a new, hypersonic missile in their arsenal, Russia's state media reported on Thursday, potentially raising the stakes in their attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and surrounding waterways against the backdrop of Israel's war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The report by the state-run RIA Novosti news agency cited an unidentified official but provided no evidence for the claim. It comes as Moscow maintains an aggressively counter-Western foreign policy amid its grinding war on Ukraine.

However, the Houthis have for weeks hinted about "surprises" they plan for the battles at sea to counter the United States and its allies, which have so far been able to down any missile or bomb-carrying drone that comes near their warships in Mideast waters.

On Thursday, Abdul Malik al-Houthi, the Houthis' secretive supreme leader, said the rebels will start hitting ships heading toward the Cape of Good Hope in Africa's southern tip. Until now, the rebels have largely struck ships heading into the Red Sea toward the Suez Canal, and such an escalation would target the longer, alternative route used by some vessels. It remains unclear how they would carry any possible assault out.

Meanwhile, Iran and the US reportedly held indirect talks in Oman, the first in months amid their long-simmering tensions over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear programme and attacks by its proxies.

"The group's missile forces have successfully tested a missile that is capable of reaching speeds of up to Mach 8 and runs on solid fuel," a military official close to the Houthis said.

Mach 8 is eight times the speed of sound.

Houthi strike shipin Red Sea

A suspected attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels struck a ship in the Red Sea early Friday, causing damage to the vessel, authorities said. —*AP*

Houthis have for weeks hinted about "surprises" they plan for the battles at sea to counter the United States **PHOTO: PTI**

ISRAEL KILLS 20 GAZANS NEAR AID CENTRE

JERUSALEM, 15 MARCH

The Palestinian Health Ministry accused Israeli forces of launching an attack near an aid distribution point in war-wracked northern Gaza, killing 20 people and wounding 155 others. The Israeli military said those reports "are false," adding it was assessing the event "with the thoroughness that it deserves."

The international community has been pushing for more aid to enter Gaza, frustrated with the growing humanitarian crisis and with Israel's restrictions that have prevented more aid getting in by land. Australia announced early Friday it would resume funding to the United Nations relief agency for Palestinians and pledged additional money to UNICEF. —*AP*

IN THE HOLY MONTH

Muslim men perform during the first Friday prayer of the fasting month of Ramadan at Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

Aid ship reaches Gaza coast with 200T food

WADI GAZA, 15 MARCH

A ship carrying 200 tonnes of aid approached the coast of Gaza on Friday in a mission to inaugurate a sea route from Cyprus that was intended to bring more assistance to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in the enclave five months into the war between Israel and Hamas.

The ship, manned by the Spanish aid group Open Arms, left Cyprus on Tuesday towing a barge laden with food sent by World Central Kitchen, the charity founded by celebrity chef José Andrés. It could be seen off Gaza's coast on Friday morning.

Israel has been under increasing pressure to allow more aid into Gaza after five months of war between Israel and Hamas. The United States has joined other countries in airdropping supplies to the isolated region of northern Gaza and has announced separate plans to construct a pier to get aid in. —*AP*

Abbas appoints adviser as PM

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has appointed his longtime economic adviser to be the next Prime Minister in the face of US pressure to reform the Palestinian Authority as part of Washington's postwar vision for Gaza. Mohammad Mustafa, is a United States-educated economist and is political independent.

Bibi obstacle to peace: Schumer

US Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer has called for Israel to hold elections to replace Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, as cracks appear in a once stable and friendly alliance. Schumer said Netanyahu had lost his way. Leaders in US have avoided criticising him.

IMF slams Pak's claim of meeting all targets

ISLAMABAD, 15 MARCH

The IMF has expressed its displeasure to cash-strapped Pakistan's claim that it had achieved all structural benchmarks, and quantitative and indicative targets even before scrutinising and completing the review by the global lender.

A team from the International Monetary Fund has reached Islamabad to hold talks before releasing the much-needed final USD 1.1 billion tranche of a $3 billion bailout package which was agreed last year.

According to media reports, the IMF Mission Chief Nathan Porter and his colleagues expressed their displeasure that the finance ministry had announced its verdict before the completion of the review process under the USD 3 billion Standby Arrangement (SBA) programme, which they had just started and would come up with their prescriptions only after analysing the official data of various sectors of the national economy.

Earlier, the finance ministry announced in its official handout that they had met all structural benchmarks and other targets before getting any feedback from the IMF.

The IMF review mission grilled the finance ministry team in the maiden session of the review talks and everyone seemed clueless about how to respond, The News International reported.

However, Finance Minister Aurangzeb took the stance that he had taken note of it and such an episode would never be repeated in future. —*PTI*

13 KILLED AFTER MIGRANT BOAT SINKS IN TURKEY

ANKARA, 15 MARCH

A rubber dinghy carrying migrants sank off Turkiye's northern Aegean coast on Friday, killing at least 16 people, officials said.

Turkish coast guard personnel rescued two migrants from the sea off the town of Eceabat in Canakkale province, while two others were able to reach the shore by themselves, Governor Ilhami Aktas said.

It was not clear how many people were on the boat when it sank and the coast guard was continuing to search the area, he said.

Aktas told the state-run Anadolu Agency that four of the dead were infants and children. —*PTI*

Squid Game actor Yeong-su guilty of sexual misconduct

TOKOYO, 15 MARCH

Squid Game actor O Yeong-Su has been given an eight-month suspended prison sentence for sexual misconduct by a court in South Korea. The 79-year-old was charged in 2022 with sexually assaulting a woman twice. The assaults took place five years earlier when O was staying in a rural area for a theatre performance in 2017, AFP reported the Seongnam Branch of the Suwon District Court as saying. O has said he will appeal against the verdict and has seven days to do so. The allegations were that he hugged a woman and kissed her on the cheek against her will, the Yonhap news agency reported.—*BBC News*

Internet outage in Africa due to sea cables failure

ABUJA, 15 MARCH

A dozen countries across Africa suffered a major internet outage on Thursday as multiple undersea telecommunication cables reported failures, network operators and internet watch groups said.

The MTN Group, one of Africa's largest network providers, said the ongoing disruptions were a result of failures in multiple major undersea cables.

Network disruptions caused by cable damage have occurred in Africa in recent years. However, "today's disruption points to something larger (and) this is amongst the most severe," said Isik Mater, director of research at NetBlocks, a group that documents internet disruptions around the world.

NetBlocks said data transmission and measurement shows a major disruption to international transits, "likely at or near the subsea network cable landing points."

The cause of the failure was not immediately clear.

There were fears of disruption of essential services in worst-hit countries like Ivory Coast where the disruption was severe. Africa leads mobile device web traffic in the world, with many of the continent's businesses relying on the internet to deliver services to their customers. —*AP*

TIKTOK BAN: CHINA ATTACKS 'BANDIT LOGIC' OF US HOUSE

BEIJING, 15 MARCH

China has attacked a Bill going through Congress that could ultimately see TikTok banned in the US, accusing it of "unjustly" behaving like a "bandit".

The Bill passed by the House of Representatives would give TikTok's parent company six months to divest from the firm or face a ban on the app.

It still faces an uphill battle in the Senate but President Joe Biden says he will sign it if it passes Congress.

Beijing has vowed to take" necessary measures" to protect its interests. —*BBC News*

FOR BUYING GUN

Dad of school shooter convicted of murder

MICHIGAN, 15 MARCH

The father of a Michigan school gunman who killed four students has been convicted of manslaughter.

The trial heard that James Crumbley, 47, had ignored his 15-year-old son's mental health needs, buying him the handgun he used in the November 2021 attack.

The jury deliberated for just over a day before coming to the verdict.

Jennifer Crumbley, his wife, is due to be sentenced next month after being convicted on the same charges.

James Crumbley was in court on Thursday for the verdict and appeared to show little reaction as it was read out.

The case against the Crumbleys marks the first time parents have been charged with manslaughter over their child's role in a shooting in the US.

Their son, Ethan, killed fellow students Tate Myre, 16; Hana St Juliana, 14; Madisyn Baldwin, 17, and Justin Shilling, 17. Seven people were also injured in the shooting.

He is serving a sentence of life in prison without parole.

Steve St Juliana, Hana's father, said on Thursday that the prosecution of the Crumbleys was "just the beginning steps" when it came to dealing with gun violence in the US.

James Crumbley **PHOTO: ANI**

"Our children are dying on a daily basis in mass murders and we do very little about this," he added.

"We can put people on the Moon, we can build skyscrapers, huge monuments like the Hoover Dam and we can't keep our kids safe in schools."

In February he told the BBC that "every day without [Hana] is a struggle".

"She was always laughing, always causing people to laugh," he recalled.

Prosecutor Karen McDonald, speaking at a press conference with parents of the four victims, said the verdict "does not bring back their children but it does mark a moment of accountability".

"These parents [the Crumbleys] could have prevented this tragedy with just the smallest of efforts," she said. —*BBC News*

Rupee falls 4 paise to close at 82.88 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 15 MARCH

The rupee declined 4 paise to 82.88 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, weighed down by unabated foreign fund outflows and a negative trend in domestic equities. Forex traders said elevated American currency overseas and crude oil prices in the international market also dented investors' sentiments. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.95 and touched the intra-day low of 82.96 and a high of 82.85 against the greenback. The local unit finally settled at 82.88 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a loss of 4 paise from its previous close. *—PTI*

Gold falls ₹50; silver climbs ₹100

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

Gold price fell by Rs 50 to Rs 66,150 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday amid a decline in precious metal prices in global markets, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the yellow metal had closed at Rs 66,200 per 10 grams. However, silver climbed Rs 100 to Rs 77,100 per kg. In the previous close, it had settled at Rs 77,000 per kg. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 66,150 per 10 grams, down by Rs 50 from the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,166 per ounce, down USD 3 from the previous close. "Gold prices traded slightly lower on Friday following inflation data, which cooled the expectations of early monetary policy interest rate cuts by the US Federal Reserve. Silver was quoting higher at USD 25.05 per ounce. *—PTI*

NHPC bags 200 MW solar project in Gujarat

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

State-run hydro power giant NHPC has bagged a 200 MW solar project which will be set up at Gujarat State Electricity Corporation's 1,125 MW renewable energy park at Khavda, in Gujarat. The e-reverse auction for the project was conducted by GUVNL (Gujarat Urja Vikas Nigam) on 2 March, 2024 and the Letter of Intent was issued on 14 March, 2024, a company statement said. The project will generate about 473 million units in the first year of commissioning and the cumulative generation from the project over a period of 25 years would be about 10,850 million units.The NHPC will develop the project on a build-own-and-operate basis at a tentative development cost of about Rs 847 crore. *—PTI*

India's oilmeals export up 9% to nearly 5.16L tonne

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

Oilmeals export rose 9 per cent year-on-year in February to nearly 5.16 lakh tonnes on higher outward shipments of soyabean meal, according to trade data. In a statement on Friday, Solvent Extraction of India (SEA) said the export of oilmeals in February stood at 515,704 tonne as compared to 4,71,770 tonne in the year-ago period. Of the total oilmeals export last month, the shipments of soyabean meal stood at 3,47,905 tonne and rapeseed meal 1,44,372 tonne. The data showed that the total export of oilmeals during the April-February period of this fiscal increased 19 per cent to 44,90,055 tonne as compared to 37,60,329 tonne in the corresponding period of the previous year. The export of soybean meal during the April-February period of the 2023-24 fiscal rose to 19.34 lakh tonne compared to 7.87 lakh tonne in same period of the previous year as Indian soybean meal was competitive in the international market. *—PTI*

Government approves policy to promote EV manufacturing

Move aims to bolster India's position as a manufacturing hub for EVs

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

The policy is envisaged to curtail the nation's reliance on crude oil imports *PHOTO: X*

- The overarching objective of the newly approved E-Vehicle Policy is to facilitate the manufacturing of EVs in India, thereby providing Indian consumers with access to state-of-the-art technology while fortifying the Make in India initiative.

In a move towards bolstering India's position as a manufacturing powerhouse for electric vehicles (EVs), Union government has greenlit a comprehensive scheme aimed at attracting investments in the EV sector and promoting indigenous manufacturing of EVs equipped with cutting-edge technology. According to a press release, the policy, approved by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, is poised to revolutionize the automotive landscape in the country by fostering a conducive environment for reputed global EV manufacturers to establish their presence in India.

The overarching objective of the newly approved E-Vehicle Policy is to facilitate the manufacturing of EVs in India, thereby providing Indian consumers with access to state-of-the-art technology while fortifying the Make in India initiative.

By encouraging investments in the EV sector, the policy seeks to galvanize the entire EV ecosystem, fostering healthy competition among industry players, driving up production volumes, realizing economies of scale, and ultimately lowering the cost of production, read the press release.

Moreover, the policy is envisaged to curtail the nation's reliance on crude oil imports, narrow the trade deficit, mitigate air pollution--especially in urban areas--and yield substantial benefits for public health and the environment.

Companies venturing into the manufacturing of EVs are mandated to make a minimum investment of Rs 4150 crore, with no upper limit on the maximum investment, read the press release.

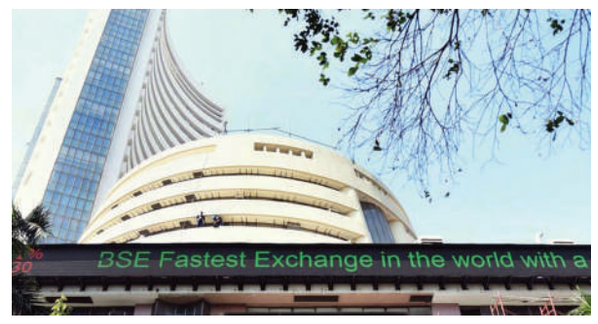
A stringent timeline of three years is set for the establishment of manufacturing facilities in India and the commencement of commercial production of EVs. Additionally, companies must achieve a domestic value addition (DVA) of 50 per cent within five years at the maximum.

To incentivize companies setting up manufacturing facilities in India, a customs duty of 15 per cent (as applicable to Completely Knocked Down (CKD) units) will be levied on vehicles with a minimum cost, insurance and freight (CIF) value of USD 35,000 and above for a period of five years, read the press release.

Companies investing in manufacturing facilities in India are permitted limited imports of EVs at a lower customs duty rate. The duty foregone on the total number of EVs allowed for import will be capped at the investment made or Rs 6484 crore (equivalent to the incentive under the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme), whichever is lower.

Import limits will be capped at a maximum of 40,000 EVs, subject to specific investment thresholds. *—ANI*

NIFTY DROPS 123.30 POINTS



Mahindra & Mahindra and Tata Motors are the major laggards *PHOTO: PTI*

Mkts trade lower on weak global trends

MUMBAI, 15 MARCH

Equity benchmark indices declined nearly 1 per cent on Friday after a day's breather amid weak global market trends and foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 453.85 points or 0.62 per cent to settle at 72,643.43 after a weak beginning. During the day, the benchmark tanked 612.46 points or 0.83 per cent to 72,484.82.

The NSE Nifty dropped 123.30 points or 0.56 per cent to 22,023.35.

From the Sensex basket, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Motors, NTPC, HCL Technologies, Larsen & Toubro, Infosys, Tech Mahindra and State Bank of India were the major laggards. Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, Tata Consultancy Services and IndusInd Bank were among the gainers. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled lower, while Shanghai ended in the green. European markets were trading with marginal gains. The US markets ended in the negative territory on Thursday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,356.29 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge slipped 0.51 per cent while the smallcap index went up by 0.25 per cent.

"Cautiousness towards mid &smallcaps continued to drag market sentiment, dampening the broader market. However, the moderation in global commodity prices and the upward revision of India's GDP for FY25 are poised to highlight robust domestic demand, potentially supporting a rebound once the broader market attains stability," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.68 per cent to USD 84.84 a barrel.

The BSE benchmark climbed 335.39 points or 0.46 per cent to settle at 73,097.28 on Thursday. The NSE Nifty gained 148.95 points or 0.68 per cent to 22,146.65. *—PTI*

Paytm gets 5 handles for UPI transactions

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

PHOTO: X

Fintech firm One97 Communications, owner of the Paytm brand, has got five handles in partnership with four banks to continue UPI transactions, as per an update on the NPCI website.

The company's existing handle @paytm is among the five handles that users can continue using without the need to make any changes at their end.

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has approved @paytm and a closed user group UPI handle @ptyes for Paytm in partnership with Yes Bank.

NPCI has also approved @pthdfc with HDFC bank and @ptsbi with State Bank of India as a partner. However, these two handles are not active immediately.

Paytm spokesperson said users can continue to use @paytm handle seamlessly without the need to make any changes at their end.

On Thursday, NPCI approved a third party application (TPAP) provider permit for Paytm in collaboration with SBI, Axis Bank, Yes Bank and HDFC bank for continuity of UPI transactions for the company's users.

Also, Paytm's shares jumped 5 per cent to hit their upper circuit limit on Friday after NPCI allowed the digital payments company to continue UPI transactions through four banks. *—PTI/ANI*

GLOBAL FLUCTUATIONS

Indian market has maintained certain level of sanity, says FM

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

PHOTO: PTI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said despite huge fluctuations globally, the Indian stock market has maintained "a certain level of sanity" and the market should be allowed to play on its own.

The statement from Sitharaman comes days after SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch had said that there are pockets of froth in the small and midcap stocks and the regulator is looking into the same to come out with a possible consultation paper.

Speaking at India Today Conclave, Sitharaman said, "I allow the markets to play on their own...we should leave it to the wisdom of the market because all of us have seen that despite huge fluctuations globally, the Indian market has maintained a certain level of sanity. It hasn't really gone too violent this way or that way. So, I place a lot of trust in the market."

Earlier this week, the capital markets regulator had raised concerns about over valuations of small and midcap stocks, indicating possible market manipulation and the risk of a market bubble.

"There are pockets of froth in the small and midcap space in the equity markets that have the potential to become a bubble and burst affecting investors," Buch had said.

On Crypto assets, Sitharaman said, they cannot be currencies and that's the government of India position. Currencies are to be issued by the government or the central bank of the day, she said.

Crypto assets are technology-driven and have a bearing on cross-border payment, she said, adding that a comprehensive regulatory framework around such assets has been considered at the G20 level.

"If one country regulates and others don't, it will be an easy way of moving money, round-tripping or funding drugs or even terrorism and so on. So we wanted to create a framework by taking it to the level of G20. It has been very well received, and I'm sure there will be some framework emerging," FM added. *—ANI*

Take down derogatory posts against BharatPe: Delhi HC to Grover

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

Delhi High Court on Friday expressed its displeasure over certain "derogatory" content posted by BharatPe co-founder Ashneer Grover against the financial technology company and directed him to take down his social media posts targeting it. Justice Prathiba M Singh said Grover's tweet calling SBI Chairmen "petty people" was an innuendo aimed at the present BharatPe board chairperson Rajnish Kumar, who earlier held that post. *—PTI*

CHALLENGING CHINA

Rivals Nissan, Honda to work together on EVs

TOKYO, 15 MARCH

Nissan and Honda's potential partnership will focus on technology that helps towards "carbon neutrality *PHOTO: X*

Japan's Nissan and Honda have agreed to study the possibility of a partnership focused on electric vehicles, as the carmakers struggle to challenge the dominance of Chinese manufacturers.

Nissan and Honda's potential partnership will focus on technology that helps accelerate efforts towards "carbon neutrality and zero traffic-accident fatalities," the carmakers said on Friday.

The feasibility study will include components related to EVs and automotive software platforms, the companies said.

"It is important to prepare for the increasing pace of transformation in mobility in the mid-to-long-term, and it is significant that we have reached this agreement based on a mutual understanding that Honda and Nissan face common challenges," Nissan President and CEO Makoto Uchida said in a statement.

Honda Director and President Toshihiro Mibe said the criteria for their partnership would be "whether the synergy of the technologies and knowledge that our companies have cultivated will enable us to become industry leaders by creating new value for the automotive industry".

Nissan's output in China last fell 24 percent to about 793,000 vehicles, dropping below the one million mark for the first time in more than a decade.

Honda has laid out plans to increase its ratio of electric vehicles and fuel cell vehicles to 100 percent of all sales by 2040.

Courtesy, Al Jazeera

PHOTO: PTI

SPICEJET TO LEASE TWO A340 PLANES FOR HAJ OPS

GURUGRAM, 15 MARCH

SpiceJet on Friday said it will lease two wide body A340 planes for Haj operations and these aircraft will be operated from Srinagar and Guwahati.

The first phase of the Haj operations is scheduled to commence on 9 May to Medina.

Each of the wide body aircraft will have a seating capacity of 324.

SpiceJet said flights are scheduled to operate from seven Indian cities -- Srinagar, Gaya, Guwahati, Bhopal, Indore, Aurangabad, and Vijayawada.

Last year, SpiceJet's Haj operations generated revenues of Rs 337 crore. *—PTI*

LTTS bags ₹800cr work for digital threat analytics centre

MUMBAI, 15 MARCH

The contract is a part of its initiative to develop digitally interconnected smart cities through cyber security *PHOTO: X*

L&T Technology Services on Friday said it has secured Rs 800 crore project from the Maharashtra government to establish a cybersecurity and digital threat analytics centre.

The engineering services arm of infra major L&T has teamed up with KPMG Assurance and Consulting Services LLP as a forensics partner to provide advanced cyber security solutions for the state, enhancing public safety against cyber threats, according to a statement.

The company said the contract is a first-of-its-kind programme in India, and a part of its initiative to develop digitally interconnected smart and safe cities through cyber security and digital forensic solutions consolidated under one umbrella.

It said the project entails designing a sophisticated cybersecurity system and establishing a cyber security and cybercrime prevention centre to address cybercrime incidents and investigations by leveraging AI (Artificial Intelligence) and digital forensic tools.

"It's an opportunity to leverage our experience in setting up over 25 command centres and recognising the growing criticality of cybersecurity and the need to invest in advanced digital safeguard platforms and tools for the benefit of the larger society," the company's chief executive officer and Managing Director Amit Chadha said.

A Central Emergency Response Team (CERT) will also be formed for incident response and investigation, it said.

The company's scrip was trading 1.62 per cent higher at Rs 5,350 apiece on the BSE at 1044 hrs on Friday, as against a 0.67 per cent correction on the benchmark. *—PTI*

1.55L AFFECTED BY FLIGHT DELAYS

Domestic air traffic rises 4.8% to 126 lakh in February

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

The domestic air traffic climbed to 126.48 lakh in February compared to 120.69 lakh in the year-ago period *PHOTO: X*

- The DGCA also said that 29,143 passengers were impacted by cancellations and airlines spent Rs 99.96 lakh towards compensation and facilities

Domestic air traffic rose 4.8 per cent on an annual basis to 126.48 lakh in February, while more than 1.55 lakh passengers were affected by flight delays during the same period, according to official data released on Friday.

In February, Air India's market share rose to 12.8 per cent from 12.2 per cent while that of IndiGo marginally dipped to 60.1 per cent from 60.2 per cent in January.

The domestic air traffic climbed to 126.48 lakh in February compared to 120.69 lakh in the year-ago period, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said.

However, the traffic was less than 1.31 crore reported in January.

"Passengers carried by domestic airlines during January - February 2024 were 257.78 lakh, as against 246.11 lakh during the corresponding period of the previous year thereby registering an annual growth of 4.74 per cent and monthly growth of 4.80 per cent," DGCA said.

As many as 1,55,387 passengers were affected due to flight delays in February and scheduled carriers shelled out Rs 222.11 lakh towards facilitation.

The DGCA also said that 29,143 passengers were impacted by cancellations and airlines spent Rs 99.96 lakh towards compensation and facilities.

Last month, a total of 917 passengers were affected due to denied boarding and the amount spent by the airlines for compensation and facilities in this regard was Rs 78.19 lakh.

A total of 791 passenger-related complaints were received by the scheduled domestic airlines in February and the number of complaints per 10,000 passengers carried was around 0.63.

The data showed that 37.8 per cent of the passenger complaints were about flight problems, followed by baggage (19 per cent), refund (16.3 per cent) and customer service (11.1 per cent), as per the data.

Last month, the domestic market share of SpiceJet dropped to 5.2 per cent from 5.6 per cent, Vistara and Akasa Air managed to maintain their share at 9.9 per cent and 4.5 per cent, respectively. *—PTI*

TATA IPL

KNOW THE TEAMS

LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS

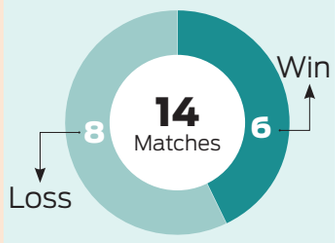
After two consecutive playoff appearances but falling short in Eliminator in 2022 and 2023, LSG will aim to go all the way and win first IPL championship

Marcus Stoinis
Key batsman

31.38	89	15
Avg (Average)	HS (Highest Score)	Innings (Innings)
150	28	27
SR (Strike Rate)	4s (Fours)	6s (Sixes)

STRENGTHS
They have a solid batting line-up consisting of Quinton de Kock, Kyle Mayers, KL Rahul. All-rounders Deepak Hooda, Stoinis and Krunal Pandya lend depth

2023 IPL RECORDS



WEAKNESS
Lack of wicket-taking thrust in the middle overs and spin-bowling needs strength. The team heavily relies on overseas player

Ravi Bishnoi
Key bowler

14	16	7.74
Innings (Innings)	Wkts (Wickets)	Eco (Economy)
28/3	0	
BBI (Best Bowling in innings)	4W (Wickets)	

SQUAD
KL Rahul (C), Amit Mishra, Ayush Badoni, Deepak Hooda, Devdutt Padikkal, K Gowtham, Krunal Pandya, Kyle Mayers, Marcus Stoinis, Mark Wood, Mayank Yadav, Mohsin Khan, Naveen Ul Haq, Nicholas Pooran, Prerak Mankad, Quinton De Kock, Ravi Bishnoi, Yash Thakur, Yudhvir Charak, Shivam Mavi, Arshin Kulkarni, Manimaran Siddharth, Ashton Turner, David Willey, Arshad Khan

SCHEDULE

24 March vs RR	30 Mar vs PBKS	2 April vs RCB	7 April vs GT
Jaipur	Lucknow	Bengaluru	Lucknow

WPL Eliminator: RCB defeat MI by 5 runs

Bangalore set up a Women's Premier League title clash against Delhi

MUMBAI, 15 MARCH

Royal Challengers Bangalore, riding on a fine all-round display from Australian Ellyse Perry, defeated defending champions Mumbai Indians by five runs in the Eliminator here on Friday to set up a Women's Premier League title clash against Delhi Capitals.

Chasing a paltry total of 135/6, the Harmanpreet Kaur-led Mumbai faltered in the chase, thanks to some incisive bowling by Perry (1/29) and Shreyanka Patil (2/16), and could manage just 130 runs for the loss of six wickets.

Perry's 66 off 50 balls was the cornerstone of RCB's total after their top order was blown away by a disciplined MI attack, reducing them to 24 for 3 inside the four overs of Powerplay.

In reply, Mumbai could not get the required momentum, which was lost completely after Harmanpreet was dismissed for 33 in the 18th over. Smriti Mandhana got the innings off the mark with an assured pulled four through square-leg off Shabnim. Sophie Devine clipped Shabnim through mid-wicket for four more and survived chopping onto her stumps when the ball brushed the stumps, but bails didn't fall to get the third boundary of the opening overs.

Sophie had again luck on her side when Amanjot Kaur missed a direct hit of her, but she ran out of luck when Hayley beat the batter on the outside edge while trying to defend and rattled the off-stump. One brought two for MI as Smriti miscued a loft away from the body and holed out to deep cover.

Disha Kasat tried to end the run-drought but hit straight to cover point and fell for a seven-ball duck. Richa Ghosh and Ellyse showed signs of stabilizing RCB's innings with four well-timed boundaries before the first time-out, with the former's loft against Saika Ishaque going over long-off for six being the standout.

But after the time-out, Pooja Vastrakar built pressure with her tight lines, and that resulted in Richa trying to loft Hayley down the ground, but miscuing too long-on. Ellyse broke the 26-ball boundary drought by walking forward & going across to heave over deep mid-wicket for six.

Brief scores:
Royal Challengers Bangalore 135 for 6 in 20 overs (Ellyse Perry 66; Hayley Matthews 2/18, Nat Sciver-Brunt 2/18, Saika Ishaque 2/27) beat Mumbai Indians 130 for 6 in 20 overs (Nat Sciver-Brunt 23, Harmanpreet Kaur 33, Amelia Kerr 27 not out) by five runs. —*PTI*

Royal Challengers Bangalore players celebrate after winning the Women's Premier League (WPL) 2024 cricket match against Mumbai Indians **PHOTO: PTI**

PHOTO: PTI

Not disappointed about missing IPL: Musheer Khan

MUMBAI, 15 MARCH

An IPL contract might be on top of cricketers' bucket list, but Mumbai's teenaged Ranji Trophy hero Musheer Khan is happy that he went unsold during last year's player auction because it gives him some more time to "understand" the T20 format.The 19-year-old, who became the youngest Mumbai batter to score a hundred in a Ranji final eclipsing the mark of legendary Sachin Tendulkar, was confident of making his mark in the IPL in due course."My name is not in the IPL. But I don't feel disappointed. My father tells me to play Test cricket and play for Team India. IPL will eventually happen, if not today then tomorrow," Musheer told PTI Video recalling the words of his father and formative coach Naushad.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Mahesh Bhupathi enters Table Tennis arena

BENGALURU, 15 MARCH

Tennis legend Mahesh Bhupathi-backed SG Sports and Entertainment (SGSE) Pvt Ltd became the eighth franchise of the Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT) and it will represent Ahmedabad in the upcoming edition of the tournament. Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT) has added an eighth franchise to the league's roster with the announcement of the SG Sports and Entertainment (SGSE) Pvt. Ltd.-owned unit that will represent Ahmedabad.The franchise-based league, promoted by Niraj Bajaj and Vita Dani under the auspices of the Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI), continues to grow. The team will be known as Ahmedabad SG Pipers, a media statement issued by UTT stated. —*PTI*

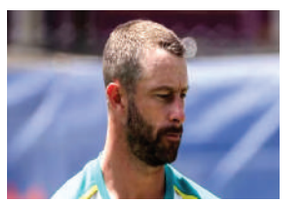


PHOTO: AFP

Australia's Wade to retire from First-Class cricket

HOBART, 15 MARCH

Australian wicketkeeper-batter Matthew Wade on Friday said he will retire from first-class cricket after the upcoming Sheffield Shield final, but will remain available for selection in white-ball formats. The Sheffield Shield final between Tasmania and Western Australia, beginning here on March 21, will be Wade's final red-ball match of a career that started in 2012. After that game, the left-handed batter will join Gujarat Titans for IPL 2024, though he will miss the first couple of matches as the Shield final clashes with the league's schedule. "I have thoroughly enjoyed the challenges that the long-form game provides.—AP

Tvesa Malik picks up a top-10 finish in Cape Town

CAPE TOWN, 15 MARCH

Tvesa Malik logged another fine result with a top-10 finish at the Standard Bank Ladies Open as she finished T-9 in the 54-hole event here on Friday.

Tvesa, the winner of a title on the Sunshine Ladies Tour, shot rounds of 73, 71 and 76. South African Gabrielle Venter shot 4-under 70 on the final day to win the title at 9-under, pushing overnight leader Kylie Henry (74) and France's Emie Peronnin (70) to tied-second spot. Tvesa, who had under-par rounds on the first two days and was lying tied fourth, had just one birdie against three bogeys in her 2-over 76 at the Par-74 Royal Cape Golf Course. Tvesa was tied for ninth alongside Kiera Floyd of South Africa and Germany's Carolin Kaufmann. Tvesa, a multiple winner and an Order of Merit topper on the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour, parred the first six holes and then dropped two shots on the seventh and ninth. —*AP*

Tvesa Malik **PHOTO: PTI**

Deepika slammed five goals, including a hat-trick, as Hockey Haryana thrashed Assam Hockey 15-0 **PHOTO: PTI**

Hockey: Deepika scores hat-trick in Haryana's big win

PUNE, 15 MARCH

Deepika slammed five goals, including a hat-trick, as Hockey Haryana thrashed Assam Hockey 15-0 in the Senior Women National Championship here on Friday.

Deepika (2nd, 40th, 42nd, 49th, 56th minutes) led the show in the opening match of the day as she shone brightly for Hockey Haryana. Known for her prowess from set pieces, Deepika converted two penalty corners besides scoring three field goals at the Major Dhyanchand Hockey Stadium Nehrunager in Pimpri.

Sharmila Devi (2nd, 35th), Mahima Choudhary (15th, 47th), Udita (32nd from PC, 36th from PC) too sparkled scoring a brace each, while Neha Goyal (8th), Navneet Kaur (26th), Ekta Kaushik (44th), Jyoti (50th) were the other goal getters in Hockey Haryana's emphatic win.

Udita too was in her elements from penalty corners as she scored both her goals from set pieces.

By their maiden win, Hockey Haryana is now atop Pool D with three points. Puducherry Hockey is the other team in the pool. In a Pool E match, Dipti Lakra (5th, 12th minutes), Dipi Monika Toppo (10th, 51st minutes), and Aten Topno (12th, 34th) struck twice each to hand Hockey Association of Odisha an emphatic 9-1 win over Goans Hockey.

Besides, Jiwan Kishori Toppo (29th), Nitu Lakra (57th), and Anupa Barla (60th) also registered their names in the scoresheet for the Hockey Association of Odisha. —*PTI*

Bees swarm court as Alcaraz beats Zverev

INDIAN WELLS, 15 MARCH

Carlos Alcaraz was stung on the side of the forehead when a swarm of bees descended on his Indian Wells quarter-final against Alexander Zverev.

Umpire Mohamed Lahyani was forced to suspend play in the third game as the bees invaded the court in California.

The match was delayed for one hour and 40 minutes before defending champion Alcaraz won 6-3 6-1. "For sure the most unusual match I have ever played in my career," Wimbledon champion Alcaraz said afterwards.

"I saw some bees around, but I thought it was just a few of them. But I saw the sky and there were thousands flying, stuck in my hair, going to me.

"It was crazy. I tried to stay away from them, but it was impossible.

"I'm a little bit afraid of them. I had to stay safe, and I was running everywhere."

The bees were particularly attracted to the spider cam - a TV camera that moves above the court on cables.

Once the players had left the court and spectators had been removed from one corner of the stands, the tournament's beekeeper arrived.

He used a vacuum to suck the bees out of the camera and into a cage so they could later be released - and that appeared to resolve the problem.

However, a few bees continued to trouble world number two Alcaraz on his return, and so the beekeeper was recalled.

Medvedev masters Rune, reaches semi final

Daniil Medvedev produced some of his best tennis Thursday at the BNP Paribas Open to reach his first ATP Masters 1000 semi-final since Rome last May.

A missed ball was a rare sight for the 28-year-old as he remained focussed to down seventh seed Holger Rune 7-5, 6-4 in a thrilling one-hour, 59-minute battle.

The World No. 4 in the PIF ATP Rankings, who reached the title match in Indian Wells a year ago, varied his return position, but frequently started deep beyond the baseline before taking a more aggressive stance within rallies. Medvedev won 62 percent of his second-serve return points.

Rune often came to net in an attempt to counter Medvedev's deep position, but the 20-time tour-level titlist still found a way around the Dane or chased down any ball with quick speed.

"Tough conditions. Especially in the first set, it was very, very windy," Medvedev said. "Tough to play beautiful, let's call it this way.

The only thing that you have to try and do is to win another point... I'm happy that in the end, I managed to just be a tiny bit more solid, some good serves in important moments. Happy to be through in the next round."

Iga Swiatek reaches semi-finals as Caroline Wozniacki retires injured

World number one Iga Swiatek went through to the last four at Indian Wells as Caroline Wozniacki retired injured from their quarter-final.

Poland's Swiatek came from 4-1 down to take the first set 6-4 before Denmark's Wozniacki required a medical time-out.

The former world number one played on but managed just one more game, which she lost, before having to pull out.

American Coco Gauff will meet Maria Sakkari in the semi-finals after a 6-4 6-3 win against China's Yuan Yue. —*AP*

Carlos Alcaraz, Daniil Medvedev and Iga Swiatek **PHOTO: AFP**

Patrik double completes incredible Leverkusen fightback

LONDON, 15 MARCH

Patrik Schick scored two goals in stoppage time to rescue Bayer Leverkusen's unbeaten run and their dreams of a remarkable treble with a 3-2 (5-4 aggregate) home win over Qarabag in their Europa League last-16 second leg on Thursday. The win keeps Xabi Alonso's Leverkusen unbeaten after 37 matches this season, sending them through to the last eight of the Europa League. With Leverkusen 2-1 down on the 90-minute mark, the Czech striker who scored in stoppage time in the first leg to level the scores at 2-2 scored in the 93rd and 98th minutes to turn the game on its head.Goalscorer Schick praised his team's desire on an "unbelievable night"."The team has done it once more," he said of the extended unbeaten run. "It's no coincidence. We fight until the last minute, the team spirit that we have at the moment is unbelievable."After fighting back from 2-0 down to draw 2-2 in Baku, Leverkusen, one of the favorites to win the Europa League, was heavily tipped to beat the Azerbaijani outsiders at home.After going to half-time locked at 0-0, Qarabag took the lead midway through the second half. —*AP*

Patrik Schick **PHOTO: AFP**

Shardul Thakur in Dhoni's leadership **PHOTO: PTI**

Excited to be back in CSK: Shardul Thakur

MUMBAI, 15 MARCH

Fresh from a title-winning run with Mumbai in the Ranji Trophy, India all-rounder Shardul Thakur is now looking forward to his IPL homecoming with the Chennai Super Kings where he expects to "grow" under the leadership of Mahendra Singh Dhoni after a not-so-great season last year.

Thakur was part of the CSK squad from 2018 to 2021 before plying his trade with Delhi Capitals (2022) and Kolkata Knight Riders (2023). He will return to CSK this season after being bought for Rs 4 crore.

"Honestly, I did not have a great IPL last year," Thakur told PTI Videos in an interview.

Thakur averaged 14.13 with the bat and managed seven wickets in the 11 IPL games he played last year.

"I am very excited to play under Mahi Bhai. There is something or the other that you take away from the game when you are playing with him. He is standing behind the stumps, guiding you, allowing you to grow," he said on the sidelines of the Ranji Trophy final against Vidarbha here on Thursday which the hosts won by 169 runs for a 42nd title.

Thakur said Dhoni's leadership style is driven by the philosophy of allowing individuals to flourish.

"I think that's the biggest quality that he possesses, he gives a lot of freedom to players and asks them to take ownership of their performances, and I am excited to join CSK again, I will say I am playing for a team that values family and values family culture," said the all-rounder. —*PTI*

EUROPA LEAGUE

Liverpool cruise into q/fs with 11-2 aggregate win

MADRID, 15 MARCH

Liverpool scored four times inside 14 minutes in a 6-1 thrashing of Sparta Prague to reach the quarter-finals of the Europa League. AC Milan, Marseille, Roma, and West Ham were among the other sides to also book their place in Friday's quarter-final draw. Despite leading 5-1 from the first leg, Jurgen Klopp named a surprisingly strong Liverpool side and was well-rewarded as the Reds remain on course for a quadruple of trophies.

Darwin Nunez and 19-year-old Bobby Clark got Klopp's men off to a flying start before Mohamed Salah marked his first club start since 1 January with his 20th of the season.

Cody Gakpo fired in the fourth before Liverpool briefly took their foot off the gas ahead of Sunday's trip to Manchester United in the FA Cup.

Veljko Birmancevic pulled a goal back for Sparta, but Dominik Szoboszlai and Gakpo completed the rout in the second half.

"It was an amazing win - and an amazing first 15 minutes," said Gakpo after an 11-2 aggregate victory.

"It's what we had in mind. It shows the confidence in the team at the moment."

West Ham trailed 1-0 from the first leg against Freiburg but roared back to reach a European quarter-final for the third consecutive season.

Lucas Paqueta turned home a corner at the far post before Jarrod Bowen blasted home to turn the tie around before half-time.

Aaron Cresswell arrowed a shot into the far corner and Mohammed Kudus then took center stage to secure a record European win for David Moyes' men.

The Ghanaian ran from deep inside his half through the heart of the Freiburg midfield and defense to slot in the fourth.

And Kudus then smashed home from the edge of the box.

"We've got two or three exceptional individual players who helped us get goals," said Moyes. "It was a brilliant performance for us to win by five."

Brighton left themselves too much to do as a 1-0 win over Roma could not overturn a 4-0 first-leg deficit. —*AP*

Liverpool's Mohamed Salah scores in the Europa League round of 16 second leg match against AC Sparta **PHOTO: AFP**

- Liverpool scored four times inside 14 minutes in a 6-1 thrashing of Sparta Prague to reach the quarter-finals of the Europa League.